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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

SUB-COMMISSION ON THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Fifty-fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 31 July 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. WARZAZI

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES:

- (a) WOMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS
- (b) CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY
- (c) NEW PRIORITIES, IN PARTICULAR TERRORISM

(agenda item 6) (continued)

1. The CHAIRPERSON said that a very serious incident had occurred during the Sub-Commission's previous meeting. The non-governmental organization (NGO), Reporters Without Borders-International, had placed insulting documents in members' pigeonholes and on the table at the back of the meeting room. It had entered the meeting room in violation of the recent decision by the Economic and Social Council to withdraw its consultative status, and thus ban it from attending meetings at the United Nations, for a period of one year. She intended to report the matter to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and to inform the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights, so that the appropriate measures could be taken against Reporters Without Borders-International and anyone else involved in the incident.

2. She invited the members of the Sub-Commission to discuss the issues raised by the Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights and the proposals made by members in response thereto.

3. Ms. HAMPSON said that the Acting High Commissioner had criticized the Sub-Commission for not responding adequately to the 12 points he had raised. His challenges had addressed both the substance and the methods of the Sub-Commission's work. His comments regarding specific issues such as extreme poverty, education, biotechnology, democracy and the rule of law were unjustified, since he seemed to be unaware of the work of various members of the Sub-Commission in those areas. The working methods of the Sub-Commission could, however, be improved through the introduction of a more systematic approach to the follow-up to reports.

4. The constraints imposed on the Sub-Commission by the Commission on Human Rights had undermined its work under agenda item 2, which accounted for the diminishing number of speakers under that item. Many NGOs had concluded that, in the circumstances, it was pointless to make any statements in relation to agenda item 2. She proposed the establishment of a sessional working group to consider the human rights implications of counter-terrorism measures employed by States. While the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had produced a digest of jurisprudence in that regard, the working group should focus on specific incidents, as opposed to legislation.

5. Mr. EIDE endorsed Ms. Hampson's proposal concerning the creation of a mechanism to address counter-terrorism measures. However, he did not share her perception of the statement by the Acting High Commissioner. It would be very useful for the Sub-Commission to reflect deeply on its strategic role, and the Acting High Commissioner had raised some pressing issues. For instance, the analysis of national protection systems should be made a priority, and the issues

connected with people on the move, such as economic migrants, refugees and the victims of trafficking, should be addressed in a more coherent way. In that regard, he expressed concern at the treatment of asylum-seekers in Europe, where reception centres had emerged that resembled concentration camps. The Sub-Commission could consider reintroducing a specific agenda item on the follow-up to completed reports and studies.

6. Mr. BENGEOA said that the representative of the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights had made an accurate diagnosis of the declining stature of agenda item 2, and had underlined the need to find an appropriate solution to the problem.

7. In response to the challenges issued by the Acting High Commissioner, he had proposed three studies: an analysis of the follow-up by the Commission on Human Rights to reports by its special rapporteurs; a review of the outcomes of the various working groups and the results of other human rights protection bodies with a view to formulating recommendations to the Commission; and, lastly, a study of prevention mechanisms, taking into account treaty monitoring bodies and their relationship with the special protection mechanisms established by the Commission.

8. The CHAIRPERSON said that it would be important to determine the reaction of the special rapporteurs and the expert members of the treaty monitoring bodies before undertaking those studies.

9. Mr. DECAUX said it was essential to obtain a broad overview of the United Nations human rights system. To that end, it would be useful to have a compilation of the recommendations of the various special rapporteurs. A document of that nature had been produced a few years previously, and it should be possible to reintroduce the practice. The independence of the special rapporteurs and working groups must be respected. The Sub-Commission should thus try to facilitate the follow-up to their work, without taking on the role of a monitoring body. It would be useful to convene a pre-sessional working group to consider all massive violations of human rights, in preparation for the consideration of agenda item 2, which might be enough to give a new lease of life to that agenda item.

10. In response to some of the comments by the Acting High Commissioner, he pointed out that the Sub-Commission had had a Special Rapporteur on terrorism and human rights for many years, and that she had carried out her studies without any financial support from OHCHR. Paradoxically, OHCHR had begun to undertake parallel, overlapping research on the issue, without referring to the Special Rapporteur's work.

11. Mr. SATTAR said that the high quality of the Sub-Commission's work in the past convinced him that it merited the continued support of the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights. However, the time and resources made available to the Sub-Commission had been curtailed. Mr. Bengoa's logic was irrefutable in that regard: if the Council and the Commission had high expectations of the Sub-Commission, they must provide it with appropriate time and resources.

12. The Acting High Commissioner had omitted to mention one challenge which should have been at the very top of his list: the formidable challenge of credibility in the context of a distressing downward trend in the observance of the rules of the international human rights

system. Public cynicism and pessimism were reversing the hopes for a more civilized world order based on the principles of international law. Even some people in the human rights community might feel despondent, when the world seemed to be entering an era of international anarchy. However, the Sub-Commission's experts and many NGOs were still lighting candles to relieve the darkness.

13. The challenge of poverty affected more people than all the other challenges, for hundreds of millions of them were subsisting in desperate want. The situation was causing agitation among idealists, particularly young ones, all over the world, who realized that such problems as poverty and discrimination could not be solved until the international economic system was made more equitable. The plight of the extreme poor called for urgent remedial action at the national and international levels. It was appropriate, therefore, that the Economic and Social Council had finally approved the proposal for the convening of the Social Forum. The Social Forum would provide an opportunity for intellectuals and other concerned people from all over the world to address the underlying issues of the perpetuation of poverty.

14. One of the causes of the current situation had been identified: the corruption which drained the developing countries of their meagre resources. That question would be taken up in connection with the report to be introduced by Ms. Mbono. His main conclusion was that even more emphasis must be given to economic, social and cultural rights than to civil and political ones.

15. Mr. PINHEIRO said that the representative of the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights had dared to say that agenda item 2 was open to the charge of irrelevance. Even in the Commission itself there was very little mention made of specific countries or situations. That was a completely unreal situation since, as the Sub-Commission had always argued, States and national agencies had a vital role to play in the promotion and protection of human rights.

16. He endorsed the comments made by Mr. Decaux concerning the special procedures and he welcomed the other useful suggestions that had been made. However, the Sub-Commission should concentrate on those proposals which could genuinely revitalize the discussion of item 2. It must provide a concrete response to the charge of irrelevance. It might indeed be useful to set up a working group to produce a draft resolution on the topic.

17. Ms. MOTOC said that it was not so much a question of the studies produced by the Sub-Commission on the themes mentioned by the Acting High Commissioner as of the methodology with which it worked and the general relevance of its work. Human rights studies must begin with the doctrine set out in the basic works of international law. One point made by the Acting High Commissioner and taken up by Mr. Eide was the importance of "passion", which had been defined by one writer as the capacity to move beyond the contingent situation: that was what was required of the Sub-Commission.

18. The Sub-Commission had become a think-tank in 1999 but did not really function as such for the Commission and the Member States. Various experts produced their in-house reports and their colleagues reacted to them, but that was not enough. As a think-tank the Sub-Commission should perhaps, while acknowledging the importance of all violations of human rights select a few topics on which to concentrate. She proposed, therefore, that the Sub-Commission should set up a working group on its methods of work, particularly the way in

which its studies and reports should be produced. Having lost some of its relevance with the restrictions on its consideration of agenda item 2, the Sub-Commission must find ways to increase its relevance through its studies and reports.

19. She agreed with the Acting High Commissioner on the need to follow up on recommendations produced by the special procedures, but not all of those procedures were concerned with gross violations of human rights. The Sub-Commission might appoint a rapporteur to follow up the relevant recommendations. She also welcomed the suggestion for a human rights yearbook containing all the texts produced during the year in question; but financial resources would again be a problem.

20. Mr. CHEN said that there were three points he wished to consider but from a more conservative and pragmatic standpoint. First of all, the challenges mentioned by the Acting High Commissioner were indeed real ones but they were not challenges for the Sub-Commission alone but rather for the whole of the United Nations system and for all mankind. Human rights issues were also addressed elsewhere in the United Nations system as well as by Governments. The Sub-Commission must seek to do its own duty in a satisfactory manner, but it was constrained by its mandate. It was not supposed to address all human rights issues.

21. Secondly, one obvious and very real challenge to the Sub-Commission was that its mandate far exceeded the resources available, so that it could not perform its functions fully. It must nevertheless do its best to improve its work and its effectiveness. Many of its experts had made some useful recommendations which merited serious study, but that would take some time.

22. Thirdly, the wide participation of observers and NGOs was welcome, but they should base their expectations of the Sub-Commission on a realistic assessment of its mandate and methodology. It should not be expected to perform in the same way as the Commission on Human Rights or to copy its methodology. There was need to enhance the relevance of agenda item 2, but without reverting to the methodology used by the Commission with respect to its corresponding agenda item.

23. Ms. ZERROUGI said that agenda item 2 was no longer of interest to anyone; even the experts themselves saw little point in speaking under it. The Commission had once again made it very clear in its resolution 2003/59 what the Sub-Commission was allowed to do. The representative of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights was quite correct, but it was really a matter for the Commission to say how the discussion of item 2 should be revitalized.

24. If the Sub-Commission was to do something about monitoring the various special human rights procedures it must first understand how those procedures worked and how their findings could best be used. The Sub-Commission should not take decisions which might be criticized elsewhere and cause it further damage. It was very important to preserve the Sub-Commission to do effective work in the cause of human rights in harmony with its parent body.

25. Mr. YOKOTA said he agreed with the Acting High Commissioner on the need to give immediate relief to the victims of gross violations of human rights. While the Sub-Commission was no longer empowered to address that aspect of the protection of human rights directly, it was clearly entitled by its mandate to examine whether the existing human rights mechanisms of the United Nations system, especially the special procedures, were addressing the issue adequately.

26. He agreed with Mr. Eide on the question of national protection systems. The universal application of the international human rights instruments was important and it was vital to ensure that they were fully applied in domestic systems. It must be remembered in that connection, however, that some countries did not have a national system or had one only in name. There was a need for more effective monitoring of the situation by international human rights bodies.

27. He also agreed with Mr. Eide that, while the movements of people did not constitute a new phenomenon, it was one that was acquiring increasingly large dimensions. There was no problem when such movements related solely to tourists, businessmen, etc., but huge numbers of people were being forced to move and they needed urgent attention. The existing United Nations mechanisms, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), did good work but they could not tackle the situation comprehensively. The Sub-Commission should give greater attention to that growing problem.

28. Mr. PARK said that, in view of the various anti-terrorism measures adopted by many Governments, it was important that the Sub-Commissions should assess what role it could play in that regard. He agreed with Ms. Hampson's proposal that the Sub-Commission should set up a sessional working group the following year to deal solely with the national measures adopted by many States under the Security Council anti-terrorism resolution.

29. He agreed with Mr. Bengoa's proposal that a working group should be established to decide how the Sub-Commission was to deal with the challenges put to it by the Acting High Commissioner.

30. With regard to the Acting High Commissioner's third challenge, he wondered whether the Sub-Commission was the best place in which to formulate a strategy for poverty reduction. The human rights approach regarded poverty as a social phenomenon which was aggravated by discrimination and other relevant factors. Active policies to remedy poverty should thus include anti-discrimination measures. In devising a poverty strategy, however, the Sub-Commission should consider the limitations of the human rights approach.

31. It was understandable that the Sub-Commission should want to deal with all human rights issues but it should be modest enough to recognize the limitations within which it had to work.

32. Ms. MBONU said that she did not agree with the approach adopted by the representative of Minnesota Human Rights Advocates to assessing the Sub-Commission's effectiveness by comparing the 1999 press release, which had mentioned many countries, and the 2002 press release, which had named none. In the past, the Sub-Commission had wasted a lot of time in its discussion of individual countries. It should concentrate on the challenges put to it by the Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights, such as the eighth challenge dealing with the issue of the campaign against terrorism. A recent example was Kenya, a country which depended largely on tourism and which had suffered significantly from terrorism and from the countermeasures adopted by certain States. The Sub-Commission should use its limited time to deal with such challenges under item 2, rather than go back to past methods, where much time had been lost on secret voting, etc.

33. The Sub-Commission should also deal with the sixth challenge on democracy and the rule of law, or the third challenge of poverty, as it was clear that corruption in developing countries had a serious impact on human rights. The Sub-Commission should appoint some of its members to examine those issues, particularly terrorism and counter-terrorism.

34. Ms. O'CONNOR said that the essential challenge for the Sub-Commission was to harmonize the intellectual approach to human rights with the needs of the people it was endeavouring to protect. The Social Forum, that had been held at its fifty-fourth session should therefore be maintained, but with a specific focus: it should provide an opportunity for NGOs to share their on-the-ground experience of the issues discussed.

35. Mr. ALFONSO MARTÍNEZ said that agenda item 2 had lost much of its usefulness over the past 10 years. Even before the limitations imposed by the Commission, the Sub-Commission had confined its resolutions to the human rights situation of developing countries and, in an effort to maintain its independence, had adopted them in secret with no explanation of the reasons for its members' votes. He had always been opposed to such self-censorship, which tended to undermine the credibility of the resolutions in question, and had therefore avoided speaking under that agenda item.

36. The Commission's decision appeared to reflect a consensus that, at least for a time, the Sub-Commission should refrain from adopting country-specific resolutions; it was far too early to oppose or reinterpret that consensus. Moreover, it was important not to give the Commission any excuse to call into question the very existence of the Sub-Commission. It would be better to wait and see if the Commission would reconsider the wisdom of its decision.

37. He had therefore been surprised by several of the comments made by the Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights. In the first place, the Acting High Commissioner had asked whether the Sub-Commission had studied the findings of the special procedures with a view to making recommendations to the Commission concerning the protection of victims of gross violations of human rights; he had apparently forgotten that, under the restrictions imposed by the Commission, the Sub-Commission was precluded from considering those findings, which were necessarily country-specific. The Acting High Commissioner had also wondered why the Sub-Commission had not made a greater contribution to the challenge of prevention at the national, regional and international levels; however, preventive measures tended to undermine the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs which were among the pillars of the Charter of the United Nations.

38. While he agreed with the Acting High Commissioner that societies in which people were able to participate meaningfully and equitably in processes of governance were societies that had a better chance at development, non-discrimination and justice, such equitable participation was rarely to be found and could certainly not be imposed on any State, whatever its system of governance, by the Sub-Commission or any other body.

39. The Acting High Commissioner's challenges might have met with a different response if they had been put before the Sub-Commission's session and had been shortened by 25 per cent, a problem complicated by the need to hold meetings of the working groups concurrently with the plenary session.

40. Lastly, he objected to the characterization of the Sub-Commission as a mere “think-tank”; its contribution went far beyond the preparation of reports.

41. Mr. PINHEIRO said he agreed with Mr. Alfonso Martínez that, in view of the reduction in the length of its session, the Sub-Commission was being asked to do the impossible. However, some of the proposals put by members seemed to be rooted in a nostalgia for the past which served no purpose; the Sub-Commission should make every effort to work productively under item 2 of its agenda.

42. Mr. AL-TURKI (Observer for Saudi Arabia) said that the Acting High Commissioner’s comments should not be interpreted as a criticism of any human rights mechanism and that, despite the ambiguity of his suggestions regarding the victims of gross violations of human rights, he was fully aware that the Commission was the only body competent to study the findings of the special procedures and that the Sub-Commission must work within its mandate.

43. In addition to the challenges put to it by the Acting High Commissioner, the Sub-Commission also faced that of its continued existence. It would be inappropriate to reopen the discussion of item 2 of the Sub-Commission’s agenda since the Economic and Social Council had recently declined to do so. The Sub-Commission’s mandate had been reviewed in 1999 and 2000, at which time consideration had been given to limiting it to a two-week session. That question would probably be re-examined in the near future. The Chairperson or another member of the Sub-Commission might wish to attend the relevant meetings of the Commission so as to discover the diversity of views on the Sub-Commission’s future.

44. Mr. CHUMAREV (Observer for the Russian Federation) said that the Sub-Commission’s decisions should be guided by the mandate established for it by the Commission and the Economic and Social Council. The number of reports which had been submitted too late to be translated into the official languages of the United Nations in advance of the current session showed that there were still problems with the fulfillment of that mandate. As the observer for Saudi Arabia had pointed out, only the Commission was empowered to consider the findings of the special procedures, as it had done in the interactive dialogue held during its fifty-ninth session. It was not for the Sub-Commission to coordinate the work of the Commission’s mechanisms or even to make recommendations concerning them.

45. Mr. CONG Jun (Observer for China) said that, while the Sub-Commission had an important function to perform as the Commission’s “think-tank”, it needed to increase its effectiveness. The improved relations between the experts and the Governments which had followed the 1999 limitations on agenda item 2 had been a positive step in that regard. It would be appropriate for the Sub-Commission to pay greater attention to the gap between the developed and developing countries, including the issue of poverty. Some of the experts’ comments on China had been inaccurate; he would be happy to provide them with documentation for their further study.

46. Mr. PLANT (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the problems of forced labour, slavery-like working conditions and human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation were rising on the international agenda; it was time to move from rhetoric to practical action against that modern scourge.

47. The ILO conventions on forced labour had achieved almost universal ratification and surveys were being conducted in States which had not yet taken that step (including China, Mongolia, Viet Nam, Pakistan and Brazil) with a view to their accession. There was also growing public awareness that human trafficking was not only a security, immigration, border control and human rights issue; it was also intimately connected with labour market failures, the weakening of institutions for the protection of workers' rights and the abuse of vulnerable migrant workers worldwide.

48. Effective eradication would require cooperation between countries of origin and destination; ILO had launched research, awareness and capacity-building programmes in Europe, Africa and the Americas and was embarking on operational activities in West Africa and Central and Eastern Europe with financial and political support from the Government of the Netherlands.

49. Because forced labour was conducted in the underground economy and linked to crime syndicates, it was difficult to determine its real dimensions in different sectors and regions or to draw a profile of the victims. The Director-General of ILO had set the goal of reaching a global estimate of the problem for inclusion in its 2005 Global Report on Forced Labour. To that end, ILO would welcome a joint meeting with the Sub-Commission and its Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery in 2004.

50. The CHAIRPERSON noted that ILO had been an ongoing participant in the work of the Sub-Commission; she regretted that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had never attended the meetings of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had made only one appearance at the Sub-Commission's sessions and that the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO/Interpol) had failed to provide needed statistics on trafficking in persons.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (agenda item 1) (continued)

Documentation

51. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Chief of the Central Planning and Coordination Service to introduce to the Sub-Commission the Guidelines on the Preparation and Submission of Documentation.

52. Mr. BUNCH (Chief of the Central Planning and Coordination Service) said that the production of the Guidelines had been based on two needs: to set down in a single document all the General Assembly directives on documentation and to codify documentation management for the benefit of everyone involved in the documentation chain. It was necessary to acknowledge the existence of a documentation chain stretching from the body mandating a report down to its point of issuance and the fact that documentation could be managed. Experience might seem to indicate that documentation existed only to cause trouble but that was not so: a document management system did exist and it worked for the benefit of all the parties concerned, including the ultimate beneficiaries such as the Sub-Commission.

53. The General Assembly had issued documentation directives in four areas: format, length, submission deadlines, and issuance and distribution. Behind those directives, which the Secretariat applied as flexibly as possible, stood the question of what the documentation process

was and how it could best be managed. The Secretariat had spent much time on the study of the documentation chain and had come to the conclusion that the production of a documentation forecast, i.e. a full list of the documents to be submitted to a given body, was an essential first step and one which involved much preliminary work. The Secretariat tried, in particular, to apply the safeguard that a body should receive all the documents it requested but no superfluous ones.

54. The granting of waivers was another important factor in the codification process. If the drafters knew at the forecasting stage that the document could not realistically be completed within the 20-page limit, a letter should be sent by OHCHR to New York, to the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, explaining the reasons why an extension was necessary, and requesting that a waiver be granted. Once the waiver had been granted, the document could be accepted in a longer form. The same applied if the drafters knew when preparing the forecast that the document would not be ready by the submission date.

55. All documents were treated in the same manner and the rules, although made as flexible as possible, were universally applied. The processing services worked on the first in, first out, principle so as to avoid preferential treatment of late documents or penalization of documents that had been submitted on time.

56. The three main reasons why a document might be refused were: length, late submission and excessive repetition. Length and submission were related to what had been projected in the forecast, so that if the forecast had been for a 16-page document, and the final document was 40 pages, it had to be returned. Similarly, it was important that the forecasted submission dates were adhered to as they greatly affected the planning of forward work by the document management services. Documents should be submitted 10 weeks before the start of a session for the necessary work to be completed. Documents needed to be ready sufficiently in advance for experts and delegates to have time to study them before they were due for consideration.

57. Documents could also be returned if they contained a high level of repetition of text that had already been submitted to a different body or to a previous session of the same body.

58. He drew attention to the section entitled Note for Drafters (pages 3 and 4 of the Guidelines), which contained a summary of the most important elements. The Guidelines were also available on the Conference Services web site, and would be updated as required.

59. Ms. HAMPSON asked whether it would be possible for the chairpersons of the Sub-Commission's intersessional working groups to submit a joint letter requesting waivers based on the type and function of the documents. A 20-page limit would not allow for an accurate reflection of the proceedings of a working group.

60. Given that special rapporteurs submitted initial, interim and final reports, a certain degree of repetition was inevitable. As that material had already been translated, it would surely not place any extra burden on Conference Services if it was included again in a different report.

61. She would like to know whether principles, such as the undue technicality of the content for example, could lead to sections of a document being removed, and, if so, whether the author had a right of appeal.

62. Mr. DECAUX said that the editors of reports, in their efforts to make things sound better, sometimes misinterpreted what the author had intended, and that could cause major problems on sensitive subjects. The issue of whether special rapporteurs were actually responsible for what they had written then came into play.

63. The CHAIRPERSON said she agreed with Mr. Decaux that editors should respect what special rapporteurs had written in their reports, even if it had not been expressed correctly. She wondered if a request could be made in advance for a waiver for the intersessional working groups, given that, as a result of the strict word limit, NGOs had complained that the Sub-Commission had not accurately reflected the issues they had raised.

64. Mr. EIDE said he appreciated the fact that, fortunately, practice was more flexible than the Guidelines would suggest. Strict application of the documentation rules would have made much of the Sub-Commission's work impossible.

65. The main consideration behind the report page limitation was the high cost of having documents translated. The Guidelines stated that documents should not be posted on the web site until all the language versions were available, but he wondered whether it might be possible for certain appendices and additions which did not need to be translated, such as bibliographies, to be posted on the web site without having been produced in hard copy.

66. Mr. ALFONSO MARTÍNEZ asked which reports were exempt from the strict application of the 10,700-word limit. He would like to know if there was a list of the exceptions to the rule and, if so, on what basis the list was compiled.

67. Mr. BUNCH (Chief of the Central Planning and Coordination Service) said that the Geneva Office had no authority to grant waivers; all requests were dealt with in New York. A waiver could be granted only in relation to a specific document and there was no such thing as a blanket waiver. All the documents for the Commission for which a waiver had been requested had been granted one, which indicated the flexibility of the system.

68. He was not in a position to comment on the issue of the degree of repetition, as his Service was not responsible for refusing documents. Although editing documents was not carried out by his Service, he suggested that the authors of reports should maintain close contact with the editors who would certainly be as flexible as possible.

69. No list of exceptions to the word-limit rule existed; all waiver requests were considered on a case-by-case basis, and the drafters of the document must put forward a convincing argument in favour of the extension.

70. The ODS was the United Nations Official Document System and no document could be posted there until all six language versions were available. However, OHCHR also had a

web site on which documents were posted and Conference Services had no input into its content. Document management services should be as flexible as possible and, if additional material could be added to the web site to make a document more complete, it should be done.

71. Mr. ALFONSO MARTÍNEZ said that, if there was no list of exceptions, the process was surely open to preferential treatment of certain bodies or report types. He would like to know who was responsible for deciding which documents were exempt from the rule. In particular, he would like clarification as to why the reports on indigenous populations were not presented in the same way on the web site as the documents on the Permanent Forum.

72. Mr. BUNCH (Chief of the Central Planning and Coordination Service) said that waivers were granted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management in New York, which was listed in the Guidelines. Questions could also be directed to the Documentation Control Board or to the Document Processing Unit within OHCHR.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.