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Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 11 July 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Waterval (Rapporteur)

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In the absence of Mr. Iwasawa (Chair), Ms. Waterval, Rapporteur, took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant
(continued)

Initial report of Pakistan (CCPR/C/PAK/1; CCPR/C/PAK/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Pakistan took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Michael** (Pakistan), introducing the initial report of Pakistan (CCPR/C/PAK/1), said that his country's commitment to the protection of civil and political rights had preceded its ratification of the Covenant. His Government had recently taken steps to strengthen protection for those rights. The National Action Plan on Human Rights, launched in 2016, covered policy and legal reforms; access to justice; implementation of key human rights priorities; implementation of international treaties to which Pakistan was a party; the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions; and an implementation and monitoring mechanism for the Plan. A budget of 750 million rupees had been allocated for establishing institutional mechanisms to implement the Plan. Implementation was overseen by a national task force under his chairmanship, representing relevant ministries and provincial departments.

3. Recently established or strengthened entities for the protection and promotion of human rights included the National Commission for Human Rights, the National Commission on the Status of Women, the National Commission for Minorities and the National Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A national commission for the rights of children was being established.

4. All provinces had human rights departments, and there were district-level human rights committees. Departmental disciplinary committees took action when public officials broke the law. The Supreme Court and the high courts had units tasked with receiving complaints of human rights violations, including by public officials. The media and civil society played an important role in raising awareness of civil and political rights.

5. Special policy, administrative and legal measures had been taken to protect vulnerable groups, including women, children, minorities and transgender and intersex persons. On 4 July 2017 the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights had approved a child protection bill to prevent children under the age of 18 from working.

6. While the moratorium on the death penalty had recently been lifted, due process was followed in prosecuting crimes deemed serious enough to warrant that penalty. His country implemented its policy on the death penalty in line with the Constitution and national laws as well as international norms.

7. Its counter-terrorism efforts were likewise in compliance with its international human rights obligations and had reduced the number of terrorist incidents over the past two years. Implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat Terrorism would further safeguard the civil and political rights of all citizens. The Government had also taken measures to protect journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders. Measures on behalf of journalists included special safety provisions, customized life insurance, a hotline and a proposal to establish an endowment fund.

8. Complaints of torture and ill-treatment by public officials were duly investigated and perpetrators punished. Numerous awareness-raising campaigns regarding the prohibition against torture had been conducted. A witness protection bill was being introduced to strengthen the safeguards surrounding court proceedings.

9. Pakistan, as a multicultural and multi-faith country, was committed to promoting and protecting freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression for all. At the same time, to ensure respect for religions and maintain social harmony, the Government took action against hate speech that led to allegations of blasphemy and religious discrimination.

10. There were no barriers to political participation or freedom of association. To make the electoral process more inclusive, quotas had been established for the representation of women and minority groups in the parliament and provincial assemblies.

11. The independent judiciary zealously safeguarded citizens' rights. A law reform committee worked to review and reform existing laws and bring them into conformity with the provisions of the Constitution and international instruments to which Pakistan was a party.

12. Challenges faced by Pakistan in implementing the Covenant included limited resources, inadequate accountability mechanisms and a need for improved training and awareness-raising for law enforcement agencies with regard to human rights issues.

13. **Mr. de Frouville** said that Pakistan's geographical location, history and varied ethnic, linguistic and religious context presented unique challenges in terms of implementing the Covenant. The State party had a strong legal tradition and attachment to the rule of law, even if the effectiveness of some laws and court rulings could be questioned. The relationship between the State and Islam, and more particularly sharia, which had been instituted in 1991, was a source of continuing tension. All those points should be kept in mind during the interactive dialogue.

14. Regarding the implementation of the Covenant's provisions in the national legal framework, he said that information provided to the Committee from alternative sources indicated that judges could decide to interpret the Constitution in the light of the Covenant but were not obliged to treat the Covenant as prevailing over national legislation. For example, a 2015 ruling by the Lahore High Court regarding an appeal concerning the execution of a paraplegic prisoner had referred to article 7 of the Covenant. The Court had stated that, when all legal remedies had been exhausted there would be no legal justification to suspend an execution and the laws of Pakistan should take precedence. Given that such decisions were possible, what measures could the State party take to facilitate the application of the Covenant?

15. Regarding the State party's remaining reservations to the Covenant, which concerned articles 3 and 25, he asked whether it intended to withdraw the reservations. The reservation to article 3 stated that the provisions of that article should be applied in conformity with the personal status laws and the law on evidence (Qanoon-e-Shahadat). Could the delegation provide a list of all the provisions of those laws that it considered incompatible with the Covenant and present a justification for maintaining the reservation?

16. The reservation concerning article 25 stated that its application should be subject to the principle laid down in article 41 (2), and article 91 (3) of the Constitution of Pakistan, which respectively required the offices of president and prime minister of the country to be occupied by Muslims. Those requirements were not based on religious tenets and were furthermore discriminatory.

17. He requested clarification concerning the participation of the National Commission for Human Rights in the work of human rights treaty bodies. For example, the Commission had allegedly not been consulted in the drafting of the State party's report to the Human Rights Committee. Furthermore, the Committee against Torture, in paragraph 20 of its concluding observations on the State party's initial report (CAT/C/PAK/CO/1), had expressed deep concern at the fact that representatives of the Commission had not been able to participate in a private meeting with the Committee just before the interactive dialogue with the State party. With the Commission operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Rights, one could legitimately ask how independent it truly was. How could that issue be resolved?

18. He requested an update on the adoption of a law on refugees and of a comprehensive policy on the voluntary repatriation of Afghan nationals. In addition to the million or so registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, there were thought to be some 1.5 million unregistered ones. Would the registration drive planned by the State party for August 2017 take place?

19. There were allegations of harassment and arbitrary detention of refugees, and of violations of the principle of non-refoulement. What measures did the State party take to

effectively protect refugees, especially those not yet registered? How did it follow up on complaints of arbitrary detention and harassment?

20. **Ms. Brands Kehris** said that, while it was encouraging to learn that the State party had passed various laws and taken measures to address violence against women and girls more effectively, the Committee remained concerned that the prevalence of such violence had reportedly not decreased in recent years. It would be helpful if the delegation could indicate in its replies to the Committee's questions on the enforcement of those various laws what measures had been taken to prevent the perpetration of violence, including sexual violence, against women and girls by law enforcement officials.

21. With regard to the Punjab Violence against Women Law of 2016, she would like to know in what way its provisions were comprehensive and would be grateful for an update on its implementation, including an update on the establishment of the centres for which it provided; she wished in particular to know how those centres functioned in practice, what their staff composition was, what specific training their staff received and how many domestic violence survivors had been provided with assistance and support at such centres. Moreover, it would be helpful to learn how many cases under the new legislation had reached the courts; how many complaints had been received; how many investigations and prosecutions had taken place; how many convictions had been secured; what penalties the perpetrators had received; what remedies had been provided for victims; whether specific measures had been taken to ensure that victims had effective access to remedies, assistance and protection; and whether data on the impact of the legislation were systematically and comprehensively collected.

22. With regard to domestic violence in particular, she would be grateful for an update on the status of the Bill on Domestic Violence at the national level, including information on its key features and, if it had not yet been adopted, on the obstacles to and expected time frame for its adoption. She would also appreciate updates on the measures taken to implement the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Acts of 2013 and 2014 in Sindh and Balochistan, respectively, and information on any remaining obstacles to their implementation.

23. It would be helpful to learn whether the objections raised by the Council of Islamic Ideology to domestic violence legislation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had delayed its progress, whether the specific law in question had ultimately been adopted and what measures had been taken and were planned to ensure its effective implementation. She was grateful for the State party's explanation of the Council's advisory opinion in support of a bill allowing husbands to "lightly beat" their wives and, in that context, would appreciate additional information on the role and influence of the Council's advisory opinions. In addition, she wished to know whether the law was sufficiently specific to exclude any interpretation that allowed "light beatings"; whether the Council's advisory opinion in support of a bill allowing such beatings could be cited in defence of their perpetration; whether political leaders and decision makers had publicly denounced the Council's position; whether campaigns had been conducted to raise awareness of the new law and, if they had, whether it had been emphasized that all violence perpetrated by a husband against his wife, including "light beatings", was prohibited and carried real penalties; and what those penalties were.

24. It was unclear whether the Anti-Rape (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act of 2016 covered marital rape and whether any specific measures had been taken to ensure its effective enforcement. Information on the implementation of that law, including an indication of the numbers of complaints filed and investigations and prosecutions conducted and information on their outcomes, would be appreciated. She wondered whether there had been any cases involving accusations against law enforcement officials and, if there had, how they had been dealt with.

25. The Committee would welcome additional information on the role of the National Commission on the Status of Women and on the quasi-judicial powers that had been granted to it in 2012 and wished in particular to know whether those powers had been exercised, how many complaints of violence against women it had received, how many such cases had been resolved and what their outcomes had been. It was unclear whether the

mandate of the National Commission included the provision of legal assistance and representation; if it did, the delegation should indicate the number of cases in which it had been involved. Moreover, clarification was needed regarding the respective mandates and competencies of the National Commission on the Status of Women and the National Commission for Human Rights in the sphere of violence against women, as was information on the manner in which they coordinated with each other and on the efforts made to eliminate any overlap in that regard.

26. While the Committee welcomed the adoption of the Anti-Honour Killings (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, it noted with concern that honour killings were reportedly on the rise. In that connection, it would be instructive if the delegation could indicate how many cases had been recorded, how many investigations and prosecutions had taken place, what their outcomes had been, how many convictions had been secured and what penalties had been imposed on perpetrators. She wished to know what mechanism had been established for the implementation of the law; what specific measures had been taken to raise awareness of its provisions among law enforcement officials, prosecutors, the judiciary, religious and community leaders, and the general public; whether specific monitoring mechanisms had been put in place to chart the implementation of the law and its impact and, if they had, which institution had been entrusted with that task at the national and provincial levels.

27. It would be helpful to learn whether the Anti-Honour Killings (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act addressed the shortcomings that had been identified in criminal law provisions on domestic violence by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Pakistan (CEDAW/C/PAK/CO/4, para. 21) and by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Pakistan (CRC/C/PAK/CO/5, para. 26), including the specific concern that *qisas* (equal retaliation) and *diyat* (financial compensation) could be applied under sharia law, and whether the application of *qisas* and *diyat* was prohibited in all cases of so-called honour crime. In addition, she wished to know whether, despite that legislative amendment, such practices persisted beyond the effective jurisdiction of national and provincial courts and what measures had been taken to ensure the successful enforcement of the law. The delegation was invited to indicate what steps had been taken to regulate and control *jirgas* (tribal councils), what the impact of those steps had been and what differences there were in approach from region to region. She wished to know the number of cases in which penalties had been imposed on *jirga* members for issuing decisions that ran counter to the provisions of criminal law, what form those penalties had taken and what efforts had been made to ensure that *jirgas* did not address criminal matters in practice, including in cases of so-called honour crime and in the tribal regions of the country.

28. She would be grateful for additional information on the enforcement and impact of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elimination of the Custom of *Ghag* Act, including information on the number of complaints received, the number of cases recorded, the number of investigations and prosecutions that had taken place, and the outcomes of those prosecutions.

29. **Ms. Cleveland** said that she would appreciate clarification regarding article 338 of the Criminal Code, which permitted the voluntary termination of pregnancy only if it was “caused in good faith for the purpose of saving the life of the woman, or providing necessary treatment to her”; the State party’s replies to the list of issues contained an unclear explanation of the term “necessary treatment” and included the claim that the voluntary termination of a pregnancy could, in addition, be permitted in the interests of preserving the “physical health” of the woman (CCPR/C/PAK/Q/1/Add.1, para. 19). Further information on the legal basis for the prevailing interpretation of that article would also be appreciated, as would an indication of whether any criminal charges had been brought, prosecutions pursued, convictions secured and penalties imposed on the basis of its provisions in the previous five years.

30. In the light of reports that many unsafe abortions were carried out in Pakistan and that thousands of women experienced complications resulting from such abortions annually, she wished to know what steps, if any, had been taken to review the law on voluntary

termination of pregnancy to ensure that the legal restrictions on access to safe abortion did not pose risks to the life and health of women. The delegation should also indicate whether the State party planned to collect data on the number of illegal and unregulated abortions performed annually and to study the risks that the current law posed to women, and what other measures, for example the expansion of health insurance coverage, had been taken to reduce maternal mortality associated with unsafe abortions.

31. Following the recent decision to devolve responsibility for post-abortion care to provincial governments, she wished to know the extent to which post-abortion care was available throughout Pakistan, whether it was covered under the health insurance programme and what training medical professionals received in that connection. With regard to family planning, she asked whether the ban on the broadcasting of advertisements for contraception remained in place, what the legal basis for the ban was, what was being done to combat the stigmatization of persons who sought and provided voluntary terminations of pregnancy, and to what extent comprehensive reproductive health education and services, including affordable contraception, were available to adolescents and to members of the general public, including to poor and disadvantaged women and girls in rural areas.

32. Lastly, it would be useful to learn what restrictions, if any, were placed on the free movement of refugees and asylum seekers in Pakistan.

33. **Mr. Ben Achour** said that, in order to provide a wider context in which to frame his questions and comments, he wished to recall the major contribution made to Islamic thought by Muhammad Iqbal, the intellectual father of Pakistan, who had argued that the Qur'an was not a legal code. Iqbal's intellectual efforts could serve as a basis on which to reconceptualize the status of sharia law.

34. He would appreciate an update on the status of the moratorium on the application of the death penalty, which had been lifted following the terrorist attack at the Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2014. Although article 6 (2) of the Covenant stipulated that the death penalty should be reserved for the "most serious crimes", it could be imposed in Pakistan for a number of crimes that could not be deemed to fall within that category, including drug trafficking and blasphemy. In that context, he wished to recall the Committee's general comment No. 6, which established that the death penalty should be a quite exceptional measure, and the pronouncements of the Economic and Social Council on the interpretation of the term "most serious crimes". Furthermore, he would be grateful if the delegation could comment on reports that executions of persons aged under 18 years continued to be carried out in Pakistan.

35. **Mr Iwasawa**, noting the existence of allegations that police and other authorities were involved in the practice of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings and that thousands of cases remained unresolved, said that he would welcome the delegation's comments on those allegations and wished to know whether there were official statistics on the number of cases of enforced disappearance in the country. He asked what steps the Government had taken to prevent enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings and what steps it intended to take in order to ensure the independent and thorough investigation of the perpetrators and ensure their accountability. He would also be interested to hear the delegation's observations regarding allegations that orders issued by the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances were not followed.

36. He would appreciate the delegation's comments on reports that the families of human rights defenders and lawyers working on cases of enforced disappearance had been subjected to harassment, threats and reprisals. He wondered whether there was a mechanism whereby the families of victims of enforced disappearance received full reparation, including social and medical assistance. It would also be useful to hear about the steps that had been taken to implement the December 2013 judgment of the Supreme Court in the case of Mohabat Shah.

37. The Committee would welcome an account of the procedures and mechanisms in place to investigate the whereabouts of missing persons. It specifically wished to know the whereabouts of two individuals who had disappeared recently: journalist Zeenat Shahzadi and activist Samar Abbas.

38. Finally, it would be interesting to hear the delegation's response to allegations that police officers involved in extrajudicial killings justified their actions as self-defence or as a means of preventing suspects from fleeing arrest or escaping from custody.

39. **Mr. Shany** said that there were reports that the Government made insufficient efforts to assist Pakistani migrant workers given death sentences overseas and that in Saudi Arabia, for example, thousands of migrants had been executed in recent years. Proceedings were currently taking place in the Islamabad High Court in that connection, an update on which would be welcome. He would also appreciate an account of the measures being taken by the Government to ensure adequate consular and legal representation for Pakistani nationals overseas.

The meeting was suspended at 4.40 p.m. and resumed at 4.55 p.m.

40. **Ms. Javeri Agha** (Pakistan) said that, despite the many unprecedented calamities that had befallen Pakistan since it had signed the Covenant, the Constitution was in line with its provisions and the Government was cognizant of its commitments thereunder. Legislation such as the Penal Code provided for the interpretation and implementation of the Covenant and landmark judgments issued by the Supreme Court stipulated that fundamental rights could not be treated lightly or interpreted in a cursory manner. The Covenant was invoked in criminal appeals; in one particular case, for example, the Supreme Court had held that the Government and the legislature could take guidance from international covenants, in addition to the research-oriented opinions of experts. The Covenant was widely quoted and there were numerous examples of how both the letter and the spirit of the various international instruments to which Pakistan was party were reflected in the country's courts.

41. The National Action Plan for Human Rights had as one of its clear themes the establishment of a dedicated joint committee to review legislation and ensure that it was in line with Pakistan's international commitments. That review was under way.

42. Attesting to the importance which the State party placed on human rights, several human rights laws had been passed and existing legislation amended. The relevant provisions addressed, inter alia, social safety nets for women, the protection of women from workplace harassment, the right to compulsory education, minimum wages for unskilled labour and the registration of Hindu marriages. The Ministry of Human Rights was consulting with civil society organizations and the provinces with a view to developing additional laws aimed at safeguarding the rights of women and children, and a transgender welfare and protection bill was currently being drafted.

43. To ensure the implementation of the aforementioned laws, human rights departments had been set up in all the provinces, as had treaty implementation cells. Although such entities certainly had budgetary and other obstacles to overcome, it was hoped that the Committee could appreciate that there was, indeed, a move towards the establishment of mechanisms which would help Pakistan honour its human rights commitments.

44. Efforts were being made to establish organizations which, from the provincial to the grass-roots level, would address issues of human rights violations and provide forums for redress. At the district level, for example, small human rights committees had recently been created. Their membership included representatives from law enforcement bodies, NGOs and bar associations, and their mandate included monitoring, investigation and awareness-raising activities. The Ministry of Human Rights had, as part of its mandate, conducted numerous awareness-raising seminars targeting members of the judiciary and university students.

45. **Mr. Zeb** (Pakistan) said that Pakistan remained a host country in one of the largest and most protracted refugee crises in the world; throughout the decades-long crisis, successive governments had consistently upheld the principle of non-refoulement. To find solutions to the problems raised by the influx of Afghan refugees, in February 2017, the Government had approved an innovative strategy which had two unique characteristics: because it was rooted in consensus among all national political parties, it was backed by strong political will, and in contrast with previous policies, which had focused on repatriation, the new approach centred on the management of refugees within Pakistan.

That said, the Government would continue the voluntary and gradual repatriation of Afghan refugees, seeing to it that their dignity and safety were ensured throughout the process.

46. The proposed enactment of the National Refugee Law was an important feature of the refugee strategy. The draft law had been shared with all the relevant stakeholders and had to be debated further, but the Government expected to have the law passed by 31 January 2018. Another important matter was the documentation of unregistered Afghans. Following the gruesome attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, the Government had decided to undertake the documentation of all Afghan refugees. That decision had been made for general security reasons, but also to protect innocent refugees who might otherwise be considered suspects when subjected to security checks.

47. Key partners in the documentation process were the Government of Afghanistan, which would check its own citizens and provide them with passports, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which would have full access to any registered Afghans in need of protection, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which, together with a number of donor countries, would be involved in strengthening the Afghan authorities' capacity to issue travel documents.

48. A flexible visa programme had been introduced, since many of the Afghans registered in Pakistan had entered the country for economic reasons rather than for protection. Any Afghan holding a Proof of Registration (PoR) card could voluntarily surrender that card, request a passport from the Afghan authorities and then apply for a Pakistan visa. Visas were available for businesspersons and traders, skilled and unskilled workers, students and spouses, with separate forms and certification processes for each visa category. Visa applications would be processed regionally but ultimately issued by the Ministry of the Interior.

49. Regarding the alleged harassment of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, while the provincial government had taken severe measures against unregistered Afghans in and around Peshawar in the wake of the two major terrorist attacks in the region, in late 2014 and early 2015, the Federal Government had immediately intervened and the crackdown had ended within three weeks. While those actions, together with the security checks, had potentially prompted some Afghans to return to their country of origin, other factors had come into play, particularly after June 2016. At that time, the Pakistan Government had begun to regulate the north-western border with Afghanistan, meaning that many Afghans living in Pakistan who had freely crossed the border on a regular basis could no longer do so without a passport and visa. As a result, many of those Afghans had chosen to return to Afghanistan. In addition, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had doubled the repatriation grant for families in late June 2016, providing an incentive for many families to return. Finally, the Afghan Government had at the same time launched a proactive campaign to encourage Afghans to repatriate.

50. Regarding freedom of movement, close to 70 per cent of registered Afghans lived outside refugee camps, and PoR cardholders were allowed to live and travel freely throughout Pakistan. Incidents of Afghans registered in one region being detained in another had been promptly remedied by the courts and the Government.

51. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that Pakistan had been taking in refugees since 1948, and the country's intentions in that regard should therefore not be doubted. Pakistan had welcomed not only Afghans but virtually every other ethnic group on the planet. Pakistan also had its own development needs and experienced huge environmental and financial pressures.

52. **Ms. Javeri Agha** (Pakistan) said that the country's National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) was an independent body that had been set up in accordance with the Paris Principles. The NCHR Act stipulated that the Commission should function without political or other bias and without interference. The Commission was financially independent, had autonomy in hiring and firing individuals and could independently address human rights issues and violations. The Ministry of Human Rights had itself submitted 635 complaints to the Commission, many of which were against government officials.

53. Responding to questions about the NCHR's attachment to the Ministry of Human Rights, she said that while its rules of business did place it under the Ministry, that did not affect its administrative or judicial independence but rather created a channel of communication with the Government.

54. **Mr. Shafique** (Pakistan) said that two recent high-profile cases — one involving child abuse and one involving military funds — demonstrated the full independence of the NCHR. In both cases, the Commission had been able to question high-ranking government or military officials, and the Commission's fact-finding work had not been obstructed in any way. The NCHR reports had been endorsed by the relevant parliamentary commissions, and a solution had been found in both cases. The NCHR did not experience interference from any government body. Finally, it was the Commission — and not the Government — that had the authority to make decisions regarding Commission members' attendance of United Nations Human Rights Committee meetings.

55. **Ms. Malik** (Pakistan) said that Pakistan was committed to adopting legislative measures to protect the rights of women, children and minorities. With regard to women's rights, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus of Pakistan — an informal, cross-party forum — worked to draft legislation and policies on women's issues in consultation with stakeholders. The Caucus had, for instance, submitted recommendations to Pakistan's Election Commission to ensure that women were fairly represented in terms of general seats in the National Assembly, and a law would be enacted requiring women to make up at least 10 per cent of the vote for an election to be valid. Also in terms of representation, five of the eight members of the NCHR were women.

56. As in any society, there were cases of violence against women, many of which were reported and the perpetrators punished in accordance with due process. Honour killings and rape, in particular, were being tackled by the Government of Pakistan at the highest level, with a view to increasing the number of convictions. Data were regularly collected on such cases in order to assist policymakers. A number of laws had been passed or amended in recent years at both the federal and regional levels to address the issue of honour killings, rape and other violence against women. Multiple policies and programmes were also in place, with the National Commission on the Status of Women playing a crucial role.

57. With regard to domestic violence, the country had 26 domestic violence centres, and survivors of such violence were provided with temporary accommodation, food and other basic necessities, counselling, medical and legal aid, and education and training in order to ensure adequate reintegration and rehabilitation. Efforts were also being made to conduct awareness-raising campaigns and to increase the number of female police officers and the number of female-only police stations. As to workplace harassment, there were specific ombudsmen at both the federal and regional levels.

58. Regarding the suggestion by a member of the Council of Islamic Ideology that husbands should be allowed to "lightly beat" their wives, it had been made by one person in an individual capacity and did not reflect the opinion of the Council, which played only an advisory role in drafting legislation. The suggestion had not in any way been taken seriously by the Government, and the ensuing debate in the media and parliament was part of the democratic process.

59. **Mr. de Frouville** said that both Committee members and the delegation needed to ensure that their dialogue was well balanced. Proper attention should be paid to each and every question so that the delegation's stance could be accurately reflected in the concluding observations.

60. He asked for further clarification as to why the Chair of the National Commission for Human Rights was absent. If the Commission was financially independent, he wondered why it formed part of the government delegation rather than coming to meet with the Committee separately, as that raised an issue of perception.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.