



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/3/SR.6
19 December 2006

Original: ENGLISH

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 1 December 2006, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. DE ALBA (Mexico)

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GE.06-15269 (E) 081206 191206

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251 OF
15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED "HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL" (agenda item 2) (continued)

(d) FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
(continued)

1. Mr. MARTÍNEZ ALVARADO (Guatemala) said that Human Rights Council resolution 1/2 of 29 June 2006, adopting the draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, had marked the successful conclusion of many years of difficult negotiations. Regrettably, on 28 November 2006, the Third Committee had adopted a draft resolution recommending that the General Assembly should defer consideration of the draft declaration. The Assembly's adoption of the Third Committee's draft resolution would erode faith in the Council. Nevertheless, Guatemala would continue to support the cause of indigenous peoples both within and outside the Council and the United Nations. While the proposals made by Mexico at the previous meeting were attractive, it remained to be seen whether they would fully protect the rights of indigenous peoples, and whether they would be supported by other States.

2. Mr. LITTLECHILD (International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development), speaking also on behalf of the International Indian Treaty Council, said that, when it had adopted resolution 1/2, the Human Rights Council had demonstrated the priority it attached to the rights of indigenous peoples. The International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development and the International Indian Treaty Council wished to put on record their profound concern at the way in which the Council's historic decision had been undermined by the Third Committee of the General Assembly. Having pledged to uphold the highest standards in promoting and protecting human rights, some States members of the Council had, for purely political reasons, misinterpreted the draft declaration and raised procedural issues in order to block its progress. Nevertheless, he looked forward to cooperating with the Council in implementing resolution 1/2, and urged the Council to work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the indigenous peoples themselves in order to prepare mechanisms for that purpose.

3. Mr. SIDOTI (International Service for Human Rights) said that the Third Committee's recommendation that the General Assembly should defer consideration of the draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples would destroy the text for good. The scaremongering campaign led by Australia, Canada and New Zealand had been successful, and the Group of African States, which had voted in favour of the Council's resolution, had voted against the draft declaration in the Third Committee. After making unreasonable concessions, all the regional indigenous caucuses had lent their support to the text proposed by the Council. For the sake of the indigenous peoples and its own credibility, the Council should reopen the discussion of the draft declaration at the current session and urge the General Assembly to adopt it without delay.

4. Mr. SPLINTER (Amnesty International) said that Amnesty International condemned the violations of international humanitarian law committed by both sides during the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in July and August 2006. The conflict had resulted in widespread death and destruction in Israel and Lebanon, and civilians had been the principal victims of military

operations. Regrettably, the Council had not mandated the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon to consider evidence of those violations and, to his knowledge, neither side had begun an investigation into them. The Council should call for the establishment of an international commission to investigate those violations, make recommendations for addressing impunity and preventing future violations, and make recommendations on the form of reparations. He called for an arms embargo on both sides and an immediate moratorium on cluster weapons.

5. Mr. NEUER (UN Watch) said that critical flaws in the Council's fact-finding missions undermined its credibility. Mission mandates were invariably one-sided, and each mission took place after a guilty verdict had already been pronounced, in defiance of every universally accepted principle of justice and transparency. All future missions to the Middle East should recognize that the extremist organizations Hamas and Hezbollah were supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran, whose President had openly called for the elimination of Israel and had denied and even mocked the Holocaust.

6. Ms. GONÇALVES DE MELO (Brazil) said that, having fully supported the adoption of Council resolution 1/2, Brazil was deeply concerned at the Third Committee's decision to defer consideration of the draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Council should resume its consideration of the draft declaration as soon as possible. Her delegation supported the proposal put forward by the representative of Ecuador at the previous meeting.

7. Mr. ALAEI (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the reason for instability in the Middle East was not the military action taken by Hezbollah but Israel's occupation of Palestine since 1948. Until that occupation ended, the Palestinian people would have the right to resist.

8. Mr. SOUFAN (Observer for Lebanon), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israel had carried out deliberate, indiscriminate and premeditated attacks on Lebanese civilian populations and infrastructures. Furthermore, the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon had declared that the leaflets dropped on Lebanese territory by Israel constituted interference in Lebanon's internal affairs. Lebanon would not be intimidated, and would protect its vital interests, sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic system, while fostering friendly and constructive relations with other States.

9. Mr. ABU-KOASH (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, pointed out that the British Government had described the Zionist invaders of Palestine as terrorists. If the Israeli occupiers wished to avoid conflict, they should first release the prisoners they were holding. With three quarters of their homeland under Israeli occupation, Palestinians wished to live peacefully in the remaining quarter. The Palestinians were entitled to speak out about Israeli human rights violations in the hope that the Council would put an end to them.

10. Mr. CORMIER (Canada), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, rejected the allegations by the representative of the International Service for Human Rights that Canada was scaremongering with regard to the draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada had a long tradition of protecting and advancing the rights of indigenous peoples and was engaged in a frank dialogue with all national stakeholders. Although it had

voted against Council resolution 1/2, Canada had undertaken to hold further consultations with a view to reaching the broadest possible agreement. Moreover, Canada remained committed to all international initiatives on indigenous issues.

(c) OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES (continued)

Other issues related to the promotion and protection of human rights, including initiatives/ issues/decisions/resolutions

11. Mr. STROMMEN (Observer for Norway), speaking on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay, commended the attention paid by the special procedures, treaty bodies and civil society to the issue of human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity, including deprivation of the rights to life and to freedom from violence and torture. He called on the special procedures and treaty bodies to continue to include consideration of such violations in their relevant mandates. Such violations should be addressed in accordance with the principles of universality and non-discrimination. The Council should pay due attention to human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the President of the Council should provide an opportunity for a discussion of those issues.

12. Mr. HIMANEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Moldova and Ukraine, urged the Council to respond to all aspects of its mandate under General Assembly resolution 60/251. An essential part of that mandate was to address the human rights of the most vulnerable, including children, particularly during armed conflicts, when they were often victims of serious violations. All children living in conflict areas required protection from military action, displacement and violence, regardless of ethnicity, sex or religion. The European Union cooperated with all its partners, including the United Nations, to prevent children from suffering in armed conflicts. He welcomed the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (A/61/529-S/2006/826) and the recent debate in the Security Council. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict should report to the Human Rights Council.

13. The deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka had left children in an increasingly precarious situation. Many children had been abducted and recruited to take part in hostilities. He called on all sides in the conflict to abide by the ceasefire agreement, protect the civilian population, end all illegal practices and release all the children concerned. The Government of Sri Lanka should carry out credible investigations, especially when the abduction and recruitment of children occurred in areas under its control, and bring those responsible to justice.

14. He reiterated the European Union's calls for all parties to bring an immediate end to acts of violence against vulnerable groups in Darfur. Reliable reports confirmed a continuing practice of ethnically targeted sexual violence against women and girls, particularly among displaced populations. The primary obligation of the Sudanese Government was to protect all individuals in its territory. The European Union called on all parties to the conflict to ensure the full, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance, and to put an end to impunity in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

15. The draft resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (A/C.3/61/L.38), which had been adopted by the Third Committee, called for an immediate end to the recruitment and use of child soldiers and for an intensification of measures to ensure the protection of children affected by armed conflict. The human rights situation had further deteriorated over the previous year, particularly in eastern Myanmar, and the number of internally displaced persons and refugees was increasing. Although the Government of Myanmar had declared its willingness to cooperate with international organizations to address concerns relating to child soldiers, the authorities' recent order to close all International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) field offices was regrettable, and he called on the Government to allow ICRC to resume its activities.

16. Terrorism threatened not only the full and universal enjoyment of human rights but also the rule of law. The European Union reiterated its solidarity with the victims of terrorist attacks and their families throughout the world. While combating terrorism, the European Union would continue to focus on safeguarding human rights and ensuring that democratic and legal institutions were not undermined. Counter-terrorism measures must always be conducted in full compliance with international law. Since the relevant international instruments amply addressed security concerns, Governments must never use the fight against terrorism to justify the repression of political parties, NGOs or the media.

17. Mr. THORNE (United Kingdom) welcomed the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict. In Uganda, all parties should take advantage of the cessation of hostilities to end a conflict that had had a terrible impact on the lives of millions of people, particularly children. The Lord's Resistance Army should release all women and children and other non-combatants, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children in armed conflict.

18. In Colombia, the armed conflict, in which the illegal drug trade was a significant factor, had claimed thousands of lives and led to widespread human rights violations and abuses. His delegation supported the Colombian Government's search for a negotiated solution to the armed conflict, and called on all illegal armed groups to cease hostilities and enter into peace talks with the Government.

19. The international community must do more to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS. Prevention must focus on those most at risk of infection; such persons were often subjected to discrimination, and measures must be taken to protect their human rights. People living with HIV/AIDS, as well as politicians, religious figures, communities, the media and individuals, must break the silence surrounding the epidemic.

20. Mr. TIRMIZI (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, said that raising controversial subjects while the Council was engaged in institution-building could reopen past divisions.

21. Mr. CORMIER (Canada) said that Canada and Afghanistan had hosted a panel discussion on the implementation of human rights in Afghanistan. Many members of the international community, including Canada, were providing assistance through the Afghanistan Compact. The panel discussion had considered the Council's role in implementing human rights. He proposed that similar panel discussions should be held at each session of the Council.

22. Mr. JAZAÏRY (Algeria) regretted that the representative of Finland had not mentioned the plight of Lebanese children. He urged the Council to heed the appeal of the Commissioner of the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon to assist children who had suffered as a result of the Israeli invasion.

23. Mr. BARARUNYERETSE (Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie) said that, at the Eleventh Francophone Summit, heads of State and Government had confirmed their commitment to the ratification of international human rights instruments, freedom of the press, measures to end corruption and impunity, and the independence of the judiciary. The special procedures should be strengthened, and the universal periodic review mechanism should promote respect for human rights and the rule of law, and strengthen member States' capacity to discharge their obligations.

24. The Group of Francophone Ambassadors had stressed the need for multilingualism, with respect to both interpretation and the translation of important documents. In that connection, he welcomed the President's initiative to ensure the full and equitable participation of all member States in the work of the Council.

25. Ms. MUDIE (Observer for Australia) called on the members of the Council to support the convening of a special session on Darfur.

26. She welcomed the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), and the Council's adoption of the draft decision entitled "cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: Nepal" (A/HRC/2/L.47). Australia had provided financial support for the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, and she hoped that the office and the Government of Nepal would cooperate in resolving outstanding problems.

27. Ms. HINTON (Observer for New Zealand) welcomed the broad support of members of the Council for the special session on Darfur, and encouraged cross-regional initiatives. The Human Rights Council should show its determination to protect human rights in all countries, even if that meant offending certain States.

28. The Council should focus on the rights of women and children. During the next year, the Council should hold a dialogue with the independent expert appointed by the Secretary-General to lead the study on the question of violence against children, and should address the question of violence against women with the Economic and Social Council and other bodies.

29. Mr. ALAEI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it was inappropriate to raise controversial subjects that were not well-defined in the legal system of the United Nations. He urged the Council to address the questions of incitement to racial and religious hatred, and the human rights of people, particularly children, living under foreign occupation.

30. Ms. KARIMI (International Commission of Jurists) said that civilians in Sri Lanka were the victims of human rights violations perpetrated by all parties to the conflict. Her organization continued to receive reports of targeted killings of civilians, enforced disappearances, torture, forced displacement, and forced recruitment of children. In that context, she urged the Council to explore with Sri Lanka the possibility of establishing a fully fledged international human rights field operation, which could play a significant role in helping to protect lives.

31. The Council should remain seized of the situation in Sri Lanka and consider the human rights situation in that country at its next session or, if the human rights crisis continued, at a special session on the subject. The Council should monitor the work of the planned Presidential Commission of Inquiry, and request reports from the Sri Lankan Government, the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons and the High Commissioner for Human Rights about the Commission's progress, including its compliance with international standards on investigations into past human rights violations.

32. The Council should request the Government of Sri Lanka to extend an invitation to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. The Council should fully consider the section of the forthcoming report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict. She urged the Council to make the necessary arrangements to enable the Government of Sri Lanka to provide comprehensive briefings at the current and future sessions of Council.

33. Ms. CASSIDY (UN Watch) welcomed the convening of a special session on Darfur. She urged the Council to consider the human rights situation in the other 16 countries and 3 disputed territories listed by Freedom House as being among the world's worst. She drew attention to violations of freedom of speech, peaceful assembly and association in Belarus; persecution of political activists, journalists and ethnic and religious minorities in Burma/Myanmar; repression of political dissent of the media in China, as well as human rights violations in occupied Tibet; the imprisonment of journalists and pro-democracy activists in Cuba; arbitrary arrests, torture and extrajudicial executions in Haiti; suppression of peaceful activity and unfair judicial proceedings in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya; the imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of political prisoners in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; the systematic repression of women and non-Muslims in Saudi Arabia; threats against human rights defenders, violence against women, disappearances and political assassinations in the Syrian Arab Republic; continued impunity for the Andijan massacre and restrictions on independent media and civil society in Uzbekistan; pervasive violence against opposition leaders and supporters, independent media and civil society in Zimbabwe; widespread war crimes against civilians in Chechnya; and violations in Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Somalia, Turkmenistan and Western Sahara.

34. Mr. GRANGE (Human Rights Watch) said that there were at least two dozen human rights situations that required urgent attention. In Belarus, the Government continued to restrict the activities of the media, the political opposition and human rights groups. In

Burma/Myanmar, the military government continued to restrict basic rights and freedoms, and committed rights violations during counter-insurgency operations in ethnic minority areas. In China, the authorities were placing stricter controls on the press, the Internet, academics, lawyers and NGOs. In Colombia, thousands of civilians were being displaced by the ongoing conflict, and enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions remained commonplace. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, freedom of expression, association, movement and religion were completely denied, and arbitrary arrests, torture and executions were a serious concern. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, government forces and armed groups continued to kill, rape and ill-treat civilians. In Iraq, torture and killings by government security forces, militias and insurgents had increased significantly in 2006. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, respect for freedom of expression and assembly had deteriorated, and the Government routinely tortured dissidents. In the Russian Federation, grave human rights abuses, including torture, abductions and forced disappearances, persisted in Chechnya. In Turkmenistan, the authorities severely suppressed all forms of dissent and isolated the population from the outside world. In Uganda, there had been widespread voting irregularities, and torture of suspected rebels and dissidents by security forces continued. In the United States of America, the Administration had authorized techniques constituting torture and other abusive interrogation measures, and was holding several dozen persons in secret prisons abroad. In Uzbekistan, no one had been held accountable for the killing by security forces of hundreds of unarmed protesters in Andijan, and human rights defenders and independent journalists had been imprisoned or forced to flee the country. In Zimbabwe, tens of thousands continued to suffer the consequences of the Government's programme of mass evictions.

35. He urged the Council to allocate a sufficient amount of time, or to hold a special session, in order to consider the integration of the question of women's rights in its work.

36. Mr. FISHER (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network), speaking also on behalf of Action Canada for Population and Development, Amnesty International, the Association for the Prevention of Torture, the Association for Women's Rights in Development, the Center for Women's Global Leadership, Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (New Rights Section), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, Global Rights, Human Rights Watch, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Federation for Human Rights, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, International Service for Human Rights, the International Trade Union Confederation, the World Organization Against Torture, Public Services International, Women for Women's Human Rights - NEW WAYS, and the World Population Foundation, welcomed the statement by the representative of Norway on human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity. There had been increasing cross-regional support for those issues in recent years, and it was hard to imagine that any State committed to human rights could disagree with the principle that no person should face death, torture or violence because of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. He looked forward to further dialogue with States that had not joined the statement but which shared the international community's concern at those systematic human rights abuses.

37. The special procedures had documented human rights violations on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, including the use of the death penalty, torture, criminal sanctions, police harassment, violence, rape, beatings, disappearances, denials of freedom of

expression, raids and closures of NGOs, and discrimination in education, employment, health and housing. He welcomed the condemnation of such violations by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

38. Mr. BARNES (Indian Council of South America) said that, although his organization supported a strong declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, it nevertheless reserved the rights of its constituents under existing international law, as had been indicated in the shadow report submitted to the Human Rights Committee in 2006. The Committee had called upon the United States of America to reconcile the 1955 Supreme Court decision on Tee-Hit-Ton Indians v. the United States and to address the permanent trusteeship of Alaska. The Tee-Hit-Ton case was a blatantly racist decision that had determined that land in Alaska was for the settlement of the white race. In a joint resolution signed by the Indigenous Peoples and Nations Coalition and the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council International Committee on Civil and Political Rights Resolution, his delegation had affirmed that the United Nations, States or any other body could not hold the Alaska Indigenous Nations to a declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as a means of addressing their international legal status. The rights of indigenous peoples must be equal to those of all other peoples, and he called on the United Nations to adopt a declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples that recognized and protected those rights and did not continue the sad legacy that had dispossessed and marginalized indigenous peoples in the past.

39. He called on the Government of Mexico to deal with the situation in Oaxaca in a fair, just and peaceful manner.

40. Ms. SCANNELLA (Amnesty International) said that there were serious shortcomings in the mandates of both the Commission of Inquiry and the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons that the Government of Sri Lanka had established to investigate human rights violations. Such shortcomings included the President's wide discretionary powers over the Commission of Inquiry, and an inadequate level of protection for complainants, witnesses and persons involved in the investigations. Amnesty International was concerned that those shortcomings would undermine the independence and effectiveness of the two bodies. It therefore urged the Government of Sri Lanka to work with the international community and other parties to the conflict to institute effective measures to protect civilians and to deliver justice without delay.

41. Mr. ALIEV (Interfaith International) said that the dismantlement of the Soviet Union had separated Russian Muslims from the Islamic educational institutions of Central Asia. The loss of self-sufficiency in training Muslim theologians and imams had opened the door to non-traditional, radical forms of Islam that preached intolerance and terrorism. In order to ensure stability in the Russian Federation and other countries where Islam was not the principal religion, traditional Islamic educational institutions must be re-established.

42. Mr. NORDSTRÖM (World Blind Union) said that his organization was a member of the International Disability Alliance, which was a network of eight global disability organizations that together represented more than 600 million persons with disabilities. While it welcomed the draft convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, the World Blind Union called for the deletion of the footnote to article 12, which limited the meaning of "legal capacity". The Human Rights Council should allow the Special Rapporteur of the Commission for Social Development

on monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities to speak before the Council on an equal footing with other special rapporteurs. The International Disability Alliance requested the Council to include an item on persons with disabilities in the agenda of every regular session.

43. Ms. BELHASSEN (International Federation of Human Rights Leagues) said that the persistence of discriminatory practices and legislation was the main cause of violence against women. In order to address that problem, measures should be taken to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Of the 185 States that had ratified the Convention, only 83 had ratified the Optional Protocol, and the provisions of the Convention had not been fully incorporated into the domestic law of States parties. Moreover, nearly one third of States parties had entered reservations to the Convention. In the Arab world, 15 out of 18 States parties had entered reservations against the principle of equality between men and women and, with one exception, none had ratified the Optional Protocol. The International Federation of Human Rights Leagues and the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women had gained support from a number of NGOs to organize a regional campaign to encourage States parties to withdraw their reservations to the Convention, harmonize their legislation with its provisions and ratify the Optional Protocol. She urged the Council to consider women's rights under a separate agenda item.

44. Mr. SHIOKAWA (International Association of Democratic Lawyers) said that article 9 of the Constitution of Japan contained the promise to the world that Japan would never repeat its history of war and colonization. Although the Prime Minister and members of the Diet were in favour of amending the Constitution, including article 9, most Japanese people were opposed to any alteration of article 9. The Council should consider new initiatives to promote peace and the full enjoyment of human rights.

45. Mr. MIRIBEL (Action contre la Faim) said that, in August 2006, 17 employees of Action contre la Faim had been massacred in Muttur in eastern Sri Lanka during a violent clash between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebel movement and Government forces. His organization was determined to ensure that investigations were conducted into those and other atrocities perpetrated against the civilian population. The massacre had been included on the list of 15 cases of human rights violations to be investigated by the national Commission of Inquiry, and he urged the Council to monitor the human rights situation in Sri Lanka and the work of the Commission of Inquiry. Action contre la Faim endorsed the recommendations made by Human Rights Watch and the International Commission of Jurists, particularly those calling for the independence of the Commission and for adequate witness protection, as well as for international observers' freedom of action and expression.

46. Mr. EKANAYAKE (Sri Lanka) said that, as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Sri Lanka was committed to upholding the rights of all children living in Sri Lanka. It appreciated the efforts of the European Union on behalf of children in Sri Lanka and for urging the LTTE rebel movement to halt the deplorable practice of recruiting children. The Government of Sri Lanka was investigating allegations that its secret forces had been facilitating child recruitment for the Karuna breakaway faction of LTTE. Sri Lanka urged the European Union to urge the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict to ensure that LTTE released, by January 2007, all child soldiers and combatants who had been recruited when they were under the age of 18.

47. Mr. ALMAGLY (Observer for the Sudan) said that the situation in Darfur was a heavily politicized issue, and he hoped that the Council's special session on Darfur would provide an opportunity to approach the issue objectively. The Government of the Sudan believed that the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement would be the most effective method of settling the conflict in Darfur. He drew attention to a note verbale dated 26 September 2006 from the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/3/G/1) regarding the Sudanese Government's plan for the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

48. Mr. BERG (Sweden), speaking on behalf of Sweden and the Netherlands, said that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) played a crucial role in efforts throughout the world to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. He welcomed the continued presence of OHCHR in Colombia in view of the reports of abductions of children and sexual violence, especially against girls, by parties to the conflict in that country. In Sri Lanka, the conflict was escalating and children were being recruited by both the LTTE rebel movement and the Karuna breakaway faction. For that reason, there was a need to strengthen the presence of OHCHR in Sri Lanka and to grant it access to all parts of the country.

49. Mr. BERZINJI (Observer for Iraq) said that Human Rights Watch's allegations that the Iraqi Government engaged in torture were far from accurate. The purpose of the Iraqi Government was to serve the people, and persons who abused their power were brought to justice. Although cases of torture were practised by militias and hostile elements in Iraq, the Government was doing its utmost to bring peace and security to the country. The international community should consider the challenges facing the Iraqi Government and be more circumspect before levelling accusations against it.

50. Mr. SHARINDRA (Sri Lanka), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the concerns expressed by Amnesty International had been addressed in both the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry and the mandate of the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons. The Government of Sri Lanka had engaged in wide-ranging discussions with representatives of States, international human rights organizations, including OHCHR, and civil society regarding those mandates, and had finalized them only after broad agreement had been reached. The eight commissioners appointed to the Commission of Inquiry, two of whom were women and five of whom were human rights activists, represented all three major ethnic groups. No complaints had been received about their suitability as candidates.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.