



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General
15 July 2019

Original: English

Human Rights Committee 126th session

Summary record of the 3621st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 9 July 2019, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Fathalla

Contents

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

Fourth periodic report of Paraguay

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

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

Fourth periodic report of Paraguay (CCPR/C/PRY/4; CCPR/C/PRY/QPR/4)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Paraguay took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Scappini** (Paraguay), introducing the fourth periodic report of Paraguay on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, said that, in 2017, his Government's online system for monitoring human rights recommendations – developed in 2011 in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and recognized internationally as an example of best practice – had been enhanced through a number of innovative upgrades. The improved system, known as SIMORE Plus, now not only tracked human rights recommendations but also linked them with the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and made it possible for civil society to monitor the Government's progress in meeting its commitments, thus increasing transparency. Moreover, Paraguay had helped other States to implement similar systems.
3. The Inter-Agency Commission for the Enforcement of International Judgments had been strengthened, enabling progress to be made in relation to the rulings of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights against Paraguay. The Government had established community development funds for indigenous communities and given them territorial assurances. It had also issued a public apology to the victims of the dictatorship of 1954–1989 and dedicated a monument to their memory. Special attention had been paid to the Views of the Human Rights Committee in connection with individual complaints against Paraguay. For example, agreements had been reached between the Government and the complainants in the cases of Eulalio Blanco Domínguez and Ernesto Benítez Gamarra.
4. Efforts to combat violence against women and promote gender equality had included the creation by the Attorney General's Office of a specialized unit to investigate domestic violence; the establishment of special police units to support victims of domestic violence; and the opening of the Ciudad Mujer ("Women's City") centre, which facilitated women's access to comprehensive public services and fostered women's empowerment. The digital Gender Atlas data platform had been launched by the Directorate General for Statistics, Surveys and Censuses to draw attention to the differences in the economic and social conditions of women and men and, thus, help in the design of public policies aimed at realizing gender equality. A law promoting positive child-rearing methods and prohibiting the use of corporal punishment had also been enacted, in 2016, to protect children from violence and bring about cultural change.
5. Combating corruption and improving transparency – and, thus, increasing confidence in the public authorities – were among the Government's main objectives. For that purpose, a national plan for preventing corruption had been introduced; a law guaranteeing the right of citizens to access public information and enhancing government transparency had been enacted; and an electronic system had been set up by the Supreme Court to facilitate access to justice and increase transparency in the judicial system. In that connection, the Public Defender Service was involved in two key projects: in the first project, it had set up a working group to collect data and develop indicators on access to justice from a human rights perspective; in the second project, it had joined forces with the national mechanism for the prevention of torture and a non-governmental organization to develop a web platform and mobile application, enabling public defenders around the country to retrieve information from a registry of complaints of torture.
6. A number of important legislative advances had also been made during the reporting period. A law governing the protection and naturalization of stateless persons had been adopted, as had a protocol regulating consultations with indigenous people and requiring their free, prior and informed consent to decisions affecting them. In addition, the Electoral Code had been modified to ensure full access to voting for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and older persons, and Act No. 5407/15, on domestic work, had

been amended to establish a minimum wage for women domestic workers, in compliance with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

7. Notwithstanding the efforts made to ensure respect for human dignity and uphold human rights, the Government continued to face a number of major challenges, not least of which was the critical state of the prison system. Regrettably, just days previously, an incident had led to the lamentable loss of human life in one prison. The Government was taking decisive action to tackle the underlying problems; it had set up a dedicated team for that purpose, comprising members of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, as well as representatives of monitoring bodies, including the national preventive mechanism. Additionally, the Ministry of Justice had developed a prison information system aimed at strengthening human rights by increasing transparency and access to information.

8. His Government was committed to safeguarding and promoting human rights and looked forward to receiving the concluding observations of the Committee. The Committee's recommendations would help it in its efforts not only to ensure full compliance with the Covenant and but also to create a society in which no one was left behind.

9. **Mr. Santos Pais**, welcoming the State party's fourth periodic report, which had been submitted under the Committee's simplified reporting procedure, said that he would be interested to learn more about the country's SIMORE Plus system for tracking human rights-related recommendations. In particular, he wished to know which State agency had overall responsibility for managing the tool and the information it contained; how often coordination meetings were held between the various government departments and ministries working on human rights-related issues; and whether SIMORE Plus could be accessed by civil society organizations, especially those representing indigenous communities. In that connection, he wondered what measures were in place to ensure that civil society was able to participate in monitoring the implementation of the Committee's concluding observations.

10. With reference to the Government's implementation of the Committee's Views, he would welcome more information about the cases mentioned by the head of delegation. Concerning the case of Eulalio Blanco Domínguez (CCPR/C/104/D/1828/2008), he would like to know whether the Views had been published in the Official Gazette and on government websites and, if so, when; whether the delegation could provide an update on the status of the investigation and any prosecutions brought against those responsible for Mr. Domínguez's death; and what specific measures, including the training of public officials, had been taken to prevent similar violations from occurring in the future. Regarding the case of Ernesto Benítez Gamarra (CCPR/C/104/D/1829/2008), he invited the delegation to comment on reports that the Public Prosecution Service had refused to launch a new investigation, citing double jeopardy laws. However, the Supreme Court had apparently indicated that new proceedings could be brought in the light of failings in the original investigation.

11. He wished to know whether the Inter-Agency Commission for the Enforcement of International Judgments was responsible for monitoring and following up on the implementation of the Committee's concluding observations and Views, and whether members of the National Congress and the judiciary were able to attend the meetings of the Commission. He noted that no information had been provided by the State party on the application of the Covenant in the domestic courts. Examples of any decisions in which the courts had applied the Covenant or its provisions had been invoked before the courts would therefore be gratefully received. He would also like to know whether, in the event of a conflict, the Covenant prevailed over the Constitution.

12. With reference to the National Human Rights Plan, which was mentioned in paragraphs 21–23 of the State party's report, he asked whether sufficient human, financial and technical resources had been allocated for its implementation; how often progress reports on the implementation of the Plan were issued and whether civil society was involved in their preparation; whether a specific State agency served as the point of contact

with civil society organizations; and what measures were in place to enable the government ministries and departments involved in implementing the Plan to coordinate with local and decentralized authorities. Information on the extent to which the Plan had been implemented so far would also be gratefully received.

13. **Mr. Quezada Cabrera** said that he would like more information about the process for electing the Ombudsman and the steps taken to ensure that the person elected had unimpeachable credentials. He would like to know what measures would be taken to ensure that the Office of the Ombudsman was fully compliant with the Paris Principles. He would welcome updated statistics on the representation of women in government bodies at the national, regional and municipal levels, as well as information on the current status of the bill on democratic parity. He would like to know more about the obstacles to women's participation in political and public life and the steps being taken to remove those obstacles. He would appreciate more information on the decisions of the Ministry of Education and Science to prohibit the dissemination and use of printed and digital materials on gender theory or ideology in schools and the distribution of a sex education guide for teachers. He would also like to know what steps were being taken to reduce the considerable gender pay gap. Lastly, he wished to draw attention to the questions raised in paragraph 13 of the list of issues (CCPR/C/PRY/QPR/4), which had not been answered in sufficient detail.

14. **Mr. Shany**, noting that there had been two convictions in connection with human rights violations committed during the dictatorship, asked when those convictions had been handed down, whether any further cases would be investigated, other than the six cases that remained pending, and why there was a discrepancy between the figures given in paragraph 33 and those mentioned in paragraphs 113 and 114 of the State party's report. He asked how many disappeared persons had been accounted for and how many remained missing.

15. Noting that the delay in compensating the victims of dictatorship-era violations remained a source of concern, he asked whether any further victims had received compensation since the submission of the State party's report and whether the State party had considered prioritizing certain claims on the basis of criteria such as the victim's age and level of suffering. He asked whether victims received an interim pension of any kind and whether Act No. 838/96, on compensation for victims of human rights violations during the dictatorship of 1954–1989, prevented victims from bringing cases before the courts. He asked whether there were plans to remove plaques and memorials that commemorated the dictatorship and what measures had been taken in schools to preserve the memory of that era.

16. Expressing concern at the high levels of teenage pregnancy in Paraguay, he asked whether the State party's efforts in that area had resulted in positive changes and whether comprehensive sex education was provided in schools. The Committee was particularly concerned about the lack of access to abortion services for victims of rape and incest and in cases where the health of the pregnant woman or girl was at risk or where the pregnancy was not viable. In that connection, he would like to know how many women and girls, including victims of rape or incest, had been prosecuted for undergoing an abortion. In the light of reports that mothers of young girls who fell pregnant could be prosecuted for failing in their duty of care, he wondered what the legal basis for such prosecutions was, whether fathers could also be charged in such cases and how the constitutional provision on duty of care was compatible with the Covenant. He would like to know the underlying reason for passing Act No. 5833/2017 on the registration of deceased unborn children in the civil registry. In addition, the delegation should comment on reports that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons lacked access to reproductive health services tailored to their specific needs.

17. With respect to the prevention of torture, he wished to know whether criminal or disciplinary action had been taken in the 28 cases mentioned in paragraph 108 of the State party's report and what progress had been made in investigating the allegations of torture at Villarrica prison. Given that the funding allocated to the national preventive mechanism had reportedly decreased since 2013, he wondered whether the mechanism had enough funding to perform its role effectively. He would appreciate more information on the division of labour between the various complaint mechanisms available to victims of torture in prisons and the measures taken to ensure the independence of those mechanisms.

Lastly, he would like to know the outcome of the investigations into the allegations of excessive use of force, ill-treatment and arbitrary detention by law enforcement officials in connection with the demonstrations of 31 March and 1 April 2017.

18. **Mr. Bulkan**, noting that the right to equality was enshrined in article 46 of the Constitution but that there was no comprehensive anti-discrimination law, asked how the right to equality was interpreted in cases of allegedly unequal treatment, whether the courts had developed a means of identifying cases in which different or unequal treatment might be justified, whether article 46 of the Constitution was applicable to actors in the private sphere, and whether that article had been applied to invalidate any laws or measures. He asked why the Senate had, in 2014, rejected a bill that would have prohibited all forms of discrimination and whether the Government intended to enact legislation that would clearly prohibit discrimination on the grounds mentioned in the Covenant and provide mechanisms to deal with such discrimination. He asked whether the institutional mechanism for developing an inclusive model of justice had been set up and, if so, how it operated and how it had influenced public policy.

19. Noting the high level of poverty among Afro-Paraguayans and indigenous people, he asked whether any programmes had been set up to address structural inequalities and guarantee equal opportunities to racial minorities, whether the delegation could provide statistics on the representation of racial minorities in public life, and whether any measures had been taken to facilitate access to positions at all levels of government and managerial positions in business and industry for members of minority groups. He would like the delegation to comment on the reports of pervasive discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, including the allegation that there had been no investigation into the cases of the 60 transgender persons murdered since 1999. It would be useful if the delegation could provide statistics on crimes motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity and information on measures taken to combat discrimination on those grounds. In addition, he wondered how the National Health Policy for 2015–2030 ensured non-discriminatory access to health care for all members of the population, including sex workers and persons living with HIV/AIDS, and whether the policy provided for a complaints mechanism.

20. He would like the delegation to comment on the proliferation of pro-life and pro-family groups that had connections to municipal and State authorities and on the State's opposition to proposals made at the international level to guarantee the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. It would be helpful if the delegation could confirm whether the law that denied prisoners and persons with disabilities the right to vote had been repealed, whether accessible voting booths and information services had been set up at all polling stations for the elections of 2018 as planned, and whether permanent infrastructural changes had been made in that regard.

21. Since the enactment of Act No. 5777/16 on the comprehensive protection of women against all forms of violence, there had been a rise in the number of femicides, yet only six femicides had been investigated. He wondered why that was the case, whether the application of the Act was being monitored and whether the Government had considered taking measures to ensure the effectiveness of the Act, such as the establishment of a special court to handle cases of gender-based violence. It would be useful if the delegation could update and disaggregate the data provided on violence against women, specify whether those data included femicides and indicate what proportion of complaints of violence against women had led to a conviction. He would like to know what proportion of complaints, investigations and prosecutions relating to gender-based violence concerned indigenous women and women living in rural areas, whether women in rural areas were less likely to report such offences than women in urban areas and, if so, how that issue had been addressed. He wished to know whether legal aid was available to victims of domestic violence, whether the State kept data on that subject and whether the State party had considered involving perpetrators in the support programmes set up by the judiciary for victims of domestic violence.

22. He wished to reiterate the Committee's request for information on the involvement of the army in civil security operations as part of its role in the Joint Task Force mentioned in paragraph 11 of the list of issues. Lastly, he would like to know the status of the bill that

would repeal Act No. 5036/2013, which provided for the deployment of the armed forces to deal with internal security matters, and why the Act had not yet been repealed, given its controversial nature.

23. **Ms. Tigroudja** asked why the number of cases of human trafficking that had been processed had fallen from 105 in 2016 to 20 in 2017, what steps were taken to detect cases of human trafficking and to support victims, whether the Rosa Virginia Shelter was reserved for victims of human trafficking and whether any other shelters had been established. She would appreciate more information on the outcomes of investigations into cases of human trafficking and on the State party's efforts to cooperate with neighbouring countries in order to tackle the problem of trafficking at their shared borders. Lastly, she would like to know what policies were in place to prevent trafficking and whether the National Programme to Prevent, Combat and Assist Victims of Trafficking and the National Investment Fund on Prevention and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Persons were operational.

The meeting was suspended at 4.20 p.m. and resumed at 4.45 p.m.

24. **Mr. Scappini** (Paraguay) said that responsibility for managing the online system for monitoring human rights recommendations, SIMORE Plus, was shared between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The two ministries verified the information submitted and any data deemed not to be of the required standard were returned to the institution that had provided them for amendment. Procedures for updating, validating and issuing information were set out in specific regulations. Data input was overseen by a high-level government official, who was supported by a network of around 80 focal points drawn from the three branches of government. It was that network, rather than the system's technical features, that constituted its strength, as the focal points served as agents of change in their respective institutions. There was no set timetable for coordination meetings, but the focal points met as and when required, especially in the run-up to meetings with human rights treaty bodies. Human rights training courses were organized annually for the focal points and other officials whose work required a knowledge of the SIMORE Plus system. In December 2017 the system had been upgraded to allow for civil society participation and officials had been introduced to the new features at a special workshop in February 2018.

25. Details of the case of Eulalio Blanco Domínguez had been published in the Official Gazette on 15 November 2017 and the corresponding agreement with the three branches of government had been signed in December 2017.

26. **Ms. Peralta** (Paraguay) said that, in order to ensure that the Government complied with its obligations under the Optional Protocol, the Human Rights Directorate of the Attorney General's Office had recommended that the case of Eulalio Blanco Domínguez should be investigated by the prosecution service's human rights unit. She had recently received confirmation that the case had indeed been referred to that unit.

27. It was not correct to state that the Public Prosecution Service had refused to launch a new investigation in the case of Ernesto Benítez Gamarra. In fact, the Human Rights Directorate of the Attorney General's Office had met with members of the Human Rights Coordinating Committee on various occasions to discuss the possibility of applying the concept of "fraudulent" *res judicata* and had ultimately decided in favour of that course of action. The decision was without precedent in Paraguay and marked a historic advance to which the Human Rights Directorate was proud to have contributed. On 3 July 2019, by resolution No. 3060, the Attorney General's Office had officially ordered the reopening of the case.

28. **Ms. Báez** (Paraguay) said that women had been actively involved in political life in Paraguay ever since the transition to democracy. Women had accounted for as many as 40 per cent of candidates for political office and currently held 16 per cent of seats in the current Chamber of Deputies. The Constitution prohibited discrimination on grounds of sex and guaranteed access to non-elective public office on equal terms, based purely on merit. However, because political parties were funded in proportion to the number of votes they received, party structures were often reluctant to provide the financial backing that would give women access to elected office on equal terms to men.

29. The Government was nonetheless working hard to improve the representation of women in decision-making positions in both elected and non-elected office. The Ministry for Women's Affairs, in consultation with women from across the political spectrum and with support from UN-Women, had drafted a bill on democratic parity that had already been submitted to parliament for consideration. The bill had been approved by the Senate but had failed to garner the support of the Chamber of Deputies, which had challenged the feasibility of introducing mandatory gender parity goals for all institutions. However, the group behind the bill continued to push for legislative change. To that end, the Ministry for Women's Affairs had issued a fourth national plan for gender equality, covering the period 2019–2024, which had also drawn on assistance from UN-Women and was designed to tackle the main obstacles to substantive equality.

30. **Ms. Sánchez** said that the Ministry for Women's Affairs had also been working with the Supreme Court of Electoral Justice. Together they had produced a directive on gender policy for elections and, with help from international organizations including the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development and the United Nations Population Fund, ran training workshops to promote women's inclusion and make electoral policy more transparent. It was hoped that those efforts would result in far greater women's representation in elected office after the next elections.

31. **Mr. Scappini** (Paraguay) said that the delegation was unable to provide a full response to the question regarding the enactment of new anti-discrimination legislation, but would reply in writing within 48 hours.

32. **Ms. Ferreira de López** (Paraguay) said that the Inter-Agency Commission for the Enforcement of International Judgments was composed of high-level State representatives with decision-making powers, including government ministers and Supreme Court judges, and was chaired by the Vice-President of the Republic. Coordination was the responsibility of the Human Rights Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Commission's remit encompassed not just court judgments but also out-of-court settlements and the concluding observations and recommendations of United Nations human rights treaty bodies. A recent restructuring of the Commission undertaken pursuant to a 2015 decree had extended its area of action, providing for representatives of civil society to be included among its members, and had firmly established its position as the body with executive as well as decision-making responsibilities for ensuring compliance with judgments, recommendations and opinions.

33. The individual communications concerning Eulalio Blanco Domínguez and Ernesto Benítez Gamarra had been placed on the Commission's programme of work at the time of the restructuring. The Vice-President's Office had carried out an in-depth analysis of each case and had established clear goals for negotiations between the State bodies involved and the representatives of the victims with a view to agreeing appropriate reparation, including compensation. The Vice-President had expressed a willingness to comply with at least 50 per cent of the recommendations in that connection.

34. A general directorate staffed by highly qualified personnel with prior and specific knowledge of the subject matter had been created within the Vice-President's Office to support the work of the Commission. Moreover, training was provided to all new civil servants appointed to State entities. The compilation and publication of information on international rulings, recommendations and opinions and the respective degree of compliance with the obligations established thereunder was greatly facilitated by the existence of the SIMORE Plus system, within which information on concluding observations and recommendations was already collated. In future, it was envisaged that the relevant information would be made available for consultation on the website of the Vice-President's Office. In view of the Vice-President's resolve to achieve further progress in that area, an increase in the Commission's budget in the course of 2019 was thought to be highly likely.

35. **Ms. López** (Paraguay) said that the provisions of the Covenant were widely known in Paraguay, partly as a result of the SIMORE Plus system but also as a result of the various high-level training courses organized for the three branches of government. The Covenant had been invoked in a number of court judgments, including judgments of the Supreme

Court relating to access to information: the delegation would be happy to provide further information on those and other cases. Paraguayan courts also frequently invoked the case law of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

36. **Ms. Peralta** (Paraguay) said that in 2006 the Human Rights Directorate of the Attorney General's Office had reviewed the State party's laws for consistency with article 14 of the Covenant and the case law of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The review had encompassed the military courts, which, according to the Constitution, were competent to hear offences committed by serving officers. The Directorate had concluded that all offences involving acts of violence committed in the exercise of a public function should be heard before a regular court, and that interpretation had been applied consistently in all subsequent cases.

37. In 2016 the Directorate had reviewed, in the light of article 15 of the Covenant, cases of torture committed during the dictatorship that had been pending investigation for a long time. In Paraguay, the offence of torture had been defined relatively recently, in 1992, after the transition to democracy. However, the Directorate had concluded that, although they did not constitute offences at the time they were committed, the acts could be tried and punished according to the general principles of law recognized internationally, in application of article 15 (2) of the Covenant. Since that decision, the Attorney General's Office had proceeded to investigate all pending cases using the definition of torture given in the new Criminal Code. The United Nations Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity had also been useful for purposes of the analysis and review.

38. **Mr. Buzo** (Paraguay) said that the Human Rights Directorate of the Ministry of Justice consisted of four separate offices, one of which was the Office for Public Policy on Human Rights, responsible for promoting the agenda of the executive branch's Human Rights Network and, more specifically, for overseeing the implementation of the National Human Rights Plan. At present, individual government institutions were required to earmark resources for implementation of the Plan from their budgets, using recommendations received from the Human Rights Committee, *inter alia*, as a reference. However, the Ministry of Justice had been working with the finance ministry's budget director to introduce a new source of financing for the implementation of human rights recommendations in the 2020 budget and to draw up forecasts for the period up to 2023 on the basis of recommendations received. Including recommendations from human rights treaty bodies and those of the national preventive mechanism, a total of 777 recommendations were being considered in the preparation of those forecasts.

39. Much of the National Human Rights Plan, which set 80 goals and envisaged nearly 300 strategic actions, had been incorporated into the National Development Plan, which was thus closely linked to the recommendations of the Committee as well as to the Sustainable Development Goals. The National Human Rights Plan had also been included in the Outcome-based Planning System. As at June 2019, around 50 per cent of the goals of the National Human Rights Plan were considered to have been met. The Human Rights Network responsible for promoting the Plan included representatives of civil society and had now been active for around a decade. The SIMORE Plus system was one of the Network's greatest achievements. Another was the introduction of a protection mechanism for the indigenous peoples of Paraguay.

40. The SIMORE Plus system aimed to strengthen civil society's involvement in monitoring and implementing the Committee's recommendations. Civil society was fully involved in preparing progress reports on the implementation of the National Human Rights Plan, which were published twice a year. In that connection, the European Union was funding a project to improve citizen participation in the defence of human rights. The Ministry of Justice was the State body that served as the point of contact for civil society organizations. The latest human rights action plan, which was currently being drafted, would provide for increased participation of the decentralized authorities.

41. **Ms. Ferreira de López** (Paraguay) said that the Ombudsman was elected after the Government had issued a call for candidates. Once the candidates' knowledge and professional background had been assessed, the Senate held a public hearing and compiled

a shortlist of candidates that was passed on to the Chamber of Deputies, which then voted on the candidates. During the tenure of the previous Ombudsman, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions had withdrawn the B status of the Office of the Ombudsman. However, the Office had regained its B status after undergoing a thorough review the previous year. Another assessment of the Office was expected to take place in six months' time.

42. Regarding compensation for victims of the dictatorship of 1954–1989, the Government was indeed considering prioritizing certain claims based on criteria such as the victim's age and health, with a view to accelerating the compensation process.

43. **Ms. Díaz Mendieta** (Paraguay) said that the decisions by the Ministry of Education and Science to prohibit the dissemination and use of printed and digital materials on gender theory and ideology in schools and not to distribute a sex education guide for teachers were still in effect. Sex education was provided in line with pupils' psychological development, and was covered in lessons on personal and social development, psychology, social sciences and literature. It covered subjects such as basic personal hygiene, good decision-making for a healthy and fulfilled life and self-awareness. It also included content aimed at preventing violations of sexual rights. An institutional guide addressed the subject of intervention in cases of violations of sexual and reproductive rights.

44. **Ms. Silvera** (Paraguay) said that the Government's attempts to reduce the gender pay gap, which stood at 24 per cent, included a strategy launched together with UN-Women in 2018 to raise awareness about equal wages and employment rights, provide training to women to boost their employability, particularly in sectors in need of workers, and support female entrepreneurs.

45. **Ms. López** (Paraguay), turning to the question of women's political representation, said that while women only accounted for 17 per cent of the legislature, they made up 35 per cent of the executive branch and half of the judiciary, when counting the judges in courts of first instance, appeal court judges and justices of the peace. Women's representation in the Public Prosecution Service and the Attorney General's Office stood at 62 per cent. In addition, a female Chief Public Defender had recently been appointed and women made up more than half of the staff of her office.

46. **Mr. Insfrán** (Paraguay) said that no legislation had been adopted to protect journalists facing threats in the course of their duties. However, the police did provide assistance, including in the form of preventive and security measures, to journalists who were in danger. So far, assistance had been provided in 14 such cases.

47. **Ms. Peralta** (Paraguay) said that an interministerial committee was responsible for training justice system officials to monitor and improve journalists' safety and security. In addition, a bill was being drafted specifically for that purpose. The killer of the journalist Pablo Medina Velázquez Medina had received a prison sentence of 25 years. With regard to questions raised in paragraph 13 of the list of issues concerning human rights defenders, Pánfilo Franco Toledo had been sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment for the murder of the campesino leader Vidal Vega. In the case concerning the killing of César Luis Martínez Romero and Zacarías Vega, there had been a stay of proceedings.

48. **Ms. López** (Paraguay) said that the delegation could provide the Committee with a list of 15 cases and convictions relating to the dictatorship of 1954–1989.

49. The budget allocated to the Office of the Ombudsman had increased, although the Government wished to do more to promote the memory of victims of the dictatorship. A draft bill that would oblige the Ministry of Finance to pay compensation to victims of dictatorship-era human rights violations was being examined by the legislature.

50. **Ms. Peralta** (Paraguay) said that a total of 141 dictatorship-era cases of torture had been investigated. An appeal court had ruled in May 2019 that the action brought against former President Alfredo Stroessner and former interior minister Sabino Augusto Montanaro for crimes including murder and torture had been abated. As a result, the proceedings against investigative police officers Camilo Almada Morel and Eusebio Torres Romero had been dismissed. The Attorney General's Office had challenged that court ruling, noting that crimes against humanity, including torture, were not subject to the statute

of limitations. As a study of regional jurisprudence on such matters had not been fruitful, she would be grateful for any guidance the Committee could give.

51. **Mr. Shany** said it was claimed that the prosecution had made no progress since 2002 in the case against Alfredo Stroessner and Sabino Augusto Montanaro. How could the delegation explain that? It appeared that two separate institutions, namely the Office of the Ombudsman and the Attorney General's Office, were needed to recommend that the Ministry of Finance should pay compensation to victims. Why should that be so?

52. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that he would like to receive the latest progress report on the implementation of the National Human Rights Plan.

53. **Mr. Quezada Cabrera** said that he would like to receive further information about the credentials of the Ombudsman. He would also be interested to hear how the State party intended to go about overcoming the shortcomings of the Office of the Ombudsman, with a view to its securing A status during the next review by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.