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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Forty-eighth session

Summary record of the 10th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 4 May 2012, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Pillay

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

Consideration of reports

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant *(continued)*

Third periodic report of New Zealand (continued) (E/C.12/NZL/3; E/C.12/NZL/Q/3 and Add.1; HRI/CORE/NZL/2010)

Articles 6 to 9 (continued)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of New Zealand took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Power** (New Zealand), replying to an earlier question by Mr. Marchán Romero, said that parents were not entitled to the additional advantage of tax credits when they had already claimed paid parental leave, which was payable at a higher rate.

3. With regard to the lack of disaggregated data on disabilities, she said that although a disability survey was usually carried out every five years, in 2011 it had had to be postponed due to the Canterbury earthquake. The general social survey did not include disaggregated data on disabilities. In its report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, New Zealand had indicated its commitment to improving the mechanisms for implementing policy affecting disabled people.

4. **Mr. Keith** (New Zealand) said that, while the Government agreed with the overall spirit of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and employment relations legislation even referred to it, New Zealand could not ratify that Convention because its legislation did not allow sympathy strikes or strikes on certain economic and social issues without penalties. Nor could the Government ratify the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), because New Zealand indigenous groups opposed accession to that instrument.

5. The unemployment and underemployment data given in the third periodic report were not measured in terms of those actively seeking work, as was the case with ILO data, but more broadly to include categories of the population such as persons discouraged from work or working at home. The figure of 25 per cent unemployment was therefore artificially high. The surge in infrastructure spending from 7 to 27 per cent, as presented in table 10 of the core document, was also unrepresentative as it arose from a one-off transfer of infrastructure assets for road transport to an independent Government agency.

6. **Mr. Smith** (New Zealand) said that the Employment Relations Amendment Act 2010 enforced employment agreements as legal labour requirements, which guaranteed that employees would not work more than 40 hours and 5 days per week and gave the Labour Inspectorate responsibility for overseeing the agreements and verifying that employers had concluded them.

7. The 2002 Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act provided explicit definitions of “harm” and “hazard” to incorporate the idea of physical and mental fatigue and required employers to prevent employees from suffering such harm. Hours of work and levels of fatigue were regulated in many economic sectors by the Department of Labour through codes of practice and guidance, while the transport sector was governed by the relevant codes for air, sea, road and rail.

8. If work was excessively harmful or hazardous, the Labour Inspectorate had the authority to issue a prohibition notice, while workers were able to take immediate strike action.

9. The Employment Relations Amendment Act 2010 spelled out the functions of the Labour Inspectorate in a way that addressed the imbalance inherent in the Inspectorate's powers whereby it could enter buildings and seize records but could not enforce agreements. In certain cases, such as in the event of a shortfall of wages, it could issue a demand notice to seek redress from employers, but employers were known to draw out the process and sometimes the employee had to wait between 12 and 18 months for satisfaction. New mechanisms for the enforcement of minimum entitlements provided for by the Act included: enforceable undertakings — voluntary agreements between the employer and the Labour Inspectorate to correct workplace violations; improvement notices — whereby the Labour Inspectorate specified steps the employer must take to comply with the law; doubling of the financial penalties for minimum rights entitlements; penalty interest for outstanding money owed to employees; and non-negotiability of minimum entitlement payments. There were no special mechanisms for grievances concerning the gender pay gap, but the matter could be addressed by the mechanisms mentioned previously, and was the subject of a number of judicial decisions and private and Government initiatives.

Articles 10 to 12

10. **Mr. Dasgupta** said that, despite a considerable decrease in tobacco consumption in the previous decade, 23.5 per cent of the population still smoked, with rates of addiction particularly high in areas inhabited by indigenous people. He wondered whether the five-year plan for tobacco control in New Zealand 2004–2009 had been a success and what further steps the Government had taken.

11. **Mr. Riedel** said he wished to know what specific measures had been taken to assist marginalized groups unable to afford public water supply, not least because they might instead have recourse to contaminated, unregistered supplies. According to the report, 33 per cent of community sewage systems in smaller communities were underperforming; in that respect, the Committee would like to know what remedial measures had already been taken. In addition, civil society sources showed that Pacific children were nine times more likely to be admitted to hospital for bronchial diseases than New Zealand European children, and there were similar discrepancies in infant mortality between Maori and Pakeha: what measures did the Government envisage to redress the situation? The delegation might also clarify what action had been taken to address the difficulty experienced by persons with intellectual disabilities in accessing certain services.

12. He pointed out that various references to programmes in the report were not accompanied by a mention of results, targets and general lessons learned such as for the cervical cancer screening programme, the Maori Health Action Plans and the 2005 Perinatal and Maternal Mortality Review. More detailed information would also be welcome on the results of mental health programmes mentioned in paragraph 505 of the report, and on mental health and treatment programmes for inmates and asylum-seekers in terms of factors like the availability of health services and waiting time for health care.

13. **Mr. Ribeiro Leão**, taking note of the extensive range of policies implemented by the Government to address poverty, asked whether the Government had considered devising a unified plan to combat poverty which would group the individual policies together.

14. **Mr. Martynov** requested further details on the availability of affordable childcare facilities for children up to 6 years of age.

15. **Ms. Cong Jun** commended the Government on its efforts to reduce domestic violence by promoting collaboration between police and advocates for child and adult victims, but enquired whether programmes existed to train police not to be excessively harsh. She also wondered what recommendations the Task Force for Action on Sexual Violence had formulated for the criminal justice system in its latest report in 2009 and whether the Government had followed up on them.

16. **Mr. Schrijver** observed that education was compulsory in New Zealand until 16 years of age but that legislation did not provide for a minimum age of employment, even though the country was party to the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). Might there be a relationship between the large number of school dropouts, particularly among Maori children, and the high level of child labour? Moreover, although a developed country, New Zealand had a large number of children living in conditions of poverty. He therefore wondered how effective the Government's measures really were in tackling child poverty, school dropout and child labour.

17. **Mr. Sadi**, welcoming the fact that all children in New Zealand had the right to education irrespective of immigration status, asked whether they were also granted medical insurance and more generally whether medical insurance covered dental care. He said that information would also be appreciated on plans to provide decent social housing for persons living in rural areas, as it was often the case that indigenous people had substandard housing, sanitation and access to water.

18. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim**, pointing out that article 11 of the Covenant referred not only to adequate food, clothing and housing but also to the continuous improvement of living conditions, asked how the Government had tried to improve living conditions in the face of fluctuations of the consumer price index. Although income disparity was not an evil, it was a cause for concern. He therefore also wished to know what approach the Government had taken to taxation in response to the rising level of income disparity over the previous decades.

19. **Mr. Kedzia** (Country Rapporteur) said that, although the report had mentioned a variety of programmes, it had not described their impact and success. More details were required on the four-year campaign against family violence; programmes to target poverty; the New Zealand Suicide Prevention Strategy 2006–2016; and measures taken to improve health-care services in remote and rural areas – an issue which had been mentioned in the Committee's concluding observations of 2003.

20. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee in reference to the case of a woman evicted from her house after her rent had been raised to a level she could not afford, asked what judicial or other remedies had been available to the victim in question and what had happened to her. Despite the Committee's 2003 recommendation that the State party should give full effect to the Covenant in its domestic legal order, her case had been thrown out of court and she was not able to appeal to human rights tribunals as they had no mandate for the issue. Some 6,000 persons could not afford housing, 3,000 lived in overcrowded conditions and the situation had no doubt been exacerbated by the Christchurch earthquake. Further information would therefore be appreciated on measures to address the social housing deficit and the shelter needs of victims, especially in respect of Maori and other disadvantaged groups.

21. **Ms. Power** (New Zealand) said that there was significant dialogue on the issue of suicide in her country as New Zealand had the highest suicide rate among male youths in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the third-highest for women. Government efforts to reduce suicide rates were guided by the New Zealand Suicide Prevention Strategy 2006–2016 which contained a wide range of initiatives, including the introduction of child and youth mental health and addiction

services in every district health board, website and text-messaging services for youths experiencing depression, and telephone counselling and support. A \$62 million package had also been allocated to prevent youth suicide and would be rolled out online, in schools, families and communities and in the health system so that nurses and youth workers in lower-decile schools could identify students with mental illness and provide them with appropriate care. Furthermore, a positive behaviour programme was due to be implemented to improve school learning environments, increase funding for primary and mental health care, set new targets for such services and establish a new family-centred approach. Although it could be misleading to draw conclusions from the suicide rates among minorities due to the low number of persons involved, it was significant that in 2009, among Pacific groups, one in three of all male deaths had been from suicide.

22. She said that New Zealand did not have a health system based on insurance payments, although many opted for private arrangements for additional cover. Asylum-seekers and migrants had access to the public health system as well. Cosmetic dental care was paid for privately unless the health of the individual was at risk, in which case, the State could defray the costs.

23. The State agency, Housing New Zealand, provided the majority of social housing schemes and owned around 15 per cent of the total rental market. Tenants would pay rents of no more than 15 per cent of their income. Housing New Zealand had existed for many years, and therefore there were some cases of tenants receiving subsidized housing even after their circumstances had changed for the better. The Government had also disbursed some \$1.2 billion in the previous year on social security accommodation supplements to cover mortgage or rental costs. About 45 per cent of beneficiaries of social housing and 25 per cent of recipients of accommodation supplement payments were Maoris. Some Maori homes were substandard, sometimes because the land was owned by families but not maintained by them as they had moved elsewhere, and sometimes because building on and upgrading Maori land was complicated by the fact that the land belonged to a number of individuals.

24. Various services had been provided to victims of the Canterbury earthquake, including short-term civil defence and emergency centres and the Canterbury earthquake accommodation service. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also worked to identify and address more specific needs of victims. To spur growth in the area in the aftermath of the earthquake, the Government had underwritten the insurance payouts of some 7,000 houses in areas where homes had been damaged beyond repair or the land was unsuitable for use. Nearly 100,000 civil defence emergency payments had been made to help people meet their housing and shelter needs, and some \$203 million had been paid to employees and employers to stimulate their business activity following earthquake damage.

25. Action against smoking had been included among the six health targets for Government health spending and, although Maori were not specifically targeted, smoking cessation programmes, including nicotine replacement therapy, had been introduced for the Maori and Pacific communities. The “Smoking Not Our Future” campaign increased public awareness of the dangers of smoking through messages delivered by youth role models. Results from a 2010 survey indicated that overall rates of smoking among youths had dropped by 1.5 per cent in just one year. The Smoke-free Environments Amendment Act 2011 increased the number of smoke-free environments and limited the number of places where tobacco-related products could be displayed, and also many iwi had implemented smoke-free policies in Maori meeting places and pastors had given smoke-free messages in Pacific communities. By July 2012, the Government aimed to provide advice and health services to 95 per cent of hospitalized smokers and 90 per cent of regular smokers.

26. **Mr. Keith** (New Zealand) said that the court decision referred to by the Chairperson dated back almost 15 years and since then the courts had developed a more expansive

approach to economic, social and cultural rights. The case had not involved an individual complaint but rather a challenge to the systemic policy of introducing market-based rents for State housing. The court had not dismissed the case out of hand but had found that the Government had attempted to take a balanced approach by modifying direct income support and providing compensation through alternative accommodation or financial assistance.

27. He said that the local authorities could indeed levy a charge for water just as for roads, libraries and other utilities, but that exceptions were made for individuals facing hardship and, where appropriate, emergency assistance payments could be granted. The Ministry for the Environment had adopted a waste strategy including targets for upgrading substandard wastewater treatment facilities by 2020. The Perinatal and Maternal Mortality Review Committee was currently compiling its fifth annual report, allowing benchmarking between countries. Although maternal mortality was generally on a par with the United Kingdom and Australia, rates among Maori and Pacific people remained relatively high. The Review Committee was currently investigating the reasons for their high suicide rate.

28. Over the previous decade, the Government had trebled spending on preschool education for children up to 6 years of age, resulting in a 60 per cent increase in intake at preschool level. The marked rise in spending derived both from an emphasis since 2004–2005 on the qualification levels of staff at preschool level and increased subsidies for 20-hour school weeks for children aged between 3 and 4, which gave parents with small children greater freedom to perform paid work.

29. Increased screening had decreased cervical cancer development by 50 per cent and mortality by 65 per cent in the past two decades and the goal was to raise the screening rate to 80 per cent by 2014. Screening rates were persistently lower in Pacific and Maori communities, but targeted community-based initiatives and public information campaigns were in place to address the disparity. For disaggregated screening data, he invited Committee members to consult the annual report of the National Screening Unit available through the New Zealand Government website.

30. Although the problems experienced by persons with intellectual disabilities seeking to access health-care services had been greatly alleviated by the introduction of the Health Passport initiative, a 2011 Ministry of Health report acknowledged persistent gaps in support and resourcing. A report published by the independent Ombudsman had also identified a need for improved mental health services in prisons. The non-institutionalized approach to mental health placed a heavy burden on prison officials, who were increasingly required to care for prisoners with serious mental health conditions who would previously have been committed to secure psychiatric facilities. A recent review of the prison system conducted by the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture had been broadly positive nonetheless.

31. The long-term health consequences of bronchial conditions and communicable diseases remained a serious problem for Pacific communities. Recognizing the urgency of that problem, the Prime Minister had included increasing child immunization and reducing the incidence of rheumatic fever among his 10 key public-sector outcome targets. The practical implications of that decision included a \$12 million increase in funding for the rheumatic fever programme, closer cooperation with civil society in the construction of enhanced care models and, under the Whānau Ora programme, an increase in the number of Maori and Pacific community-based providers able to offer more accessible and appropriate care.

32. To facilitate recruitment and retention in rural medical services, the Government had made substantial efforts to improve salaries and support for medical professionals working

in sparsely populated areas. The fruits of those efforts included national support networks for neurology and oncology specialists.

33. **Ms. Power** (New Zealand) said that the high rate of domestic violence in New Zealand had been a source of concern and a focus of social policy for many years. The “It’s not OK” campaign, currently in its fifth year, took a multi-layered approach that combined television advertising, support for community-led projects, media advocacy and a toll-free information and advice line. Its success in driving behavioural change and mobilizing communities had been acknowledged domestically and internationally, including by the journal *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*. Research had found that, as a result of the campaign, one in three persons on average and close to one in two persons in Maori and Pacific communities would henceforth take action to prevent family violence.

34. The Task Force for Action on Violence within Families had developed a set of indicators for measuring family violence that was designed to answer the following three questions: were outcomes becoming more or less severe, was the overall incidence of family violence increasing or decreasing, and were the signs of reduced tolerance and behavioural change evident across all communities? The Task Force’s 2011–2012 programme established measurable actions for areas including family empowerment, early intervention and crisis response. While nationwide rates for reporting cases of family violence had risen in both 2010 and 2011, the offending rate had fallen in the latter year, reflecting a rise in the number of reported cases that were not prosecuted. The reasons for that change were not fully understood but might include a change in policing practices following the introduction of new guidelines on safety orders in 2010.

35. There was a broad portfolio of programmes addressing family violence issues nationwide, most of which were described in the report. Foremost among them were the Family-Centred Services Fund, created in 2011 to help NGOs to deliver support and advocacy programmes for victims and perpetrators, the Family Violence Ministerial Team, created in 2008, and the Campaign for Action, which worked at the grass-roots level. More recent developments included a dedicated family violence unit, created in 2011 to provide specialized support for policy research, service development and communication on family violence initiatives, and the CLiC (Community Link in Courts) service, launched in 2010 to provide support for victims and perpetrators through a holistic approach that took drug, alcohol, financial and other issues that contributed to family violence into account.

36. Reducing violence against women with disabilities had been a central priority for the Ministry of Women’s Affairs since a survey had found that around a third of adult victims of sexual violence had a disability or impairment of some form. The Task Force for Action on Sexual Violence was working to reduce the impact of such violence, a particular concern being that refugees were often ill-equipped to cater for persons with disabilities. The Task Force was also working to ensure continued funding for key initiatives including the inter-agency response teams that monitored cases of family violence reported to the police, the family safety teams that worked intensively with at-risk families, the campaigns that sought to influence behaviour in Maori and Pacific populations using community leaders as a conduit and the Family Violence Clearing House responsible for collecting and collating data about domestic violence.

37. Child poverty rates had fallen significantly in the past decade, reflecting increased employment and the impact of the Working for Families tax credits programme. That programme had been designed to reduce the benefit dependency that was recognized to be a major contributor to poverty and affected around 60 per cent of poor children. Many benefit-dependent households were headed by sole parents and for that reason a key aim of the Future Focus welfare reform package launched in 2011 had been to offer a combination of tax breaks, training and free early education that would compensate for the withdrawal of direct benefits and make employment a viable option for those parents. Programme results

to date indicated that, with intensive case management, most participants were in training or paid employment within six months. The Government was committed to supporting sole parents but was equally determined that training and workforce integration rather than the payment of direct benefits should henceforth be the policy goal; a further round of reforms currently before parliament provided for the introduction of an investment-led approach to welfare assistance under which the priority was to identify and invest in those most at risk as soon as possible and thus minimize the period of benefit dependency. That approach was also a central plank of the Government's policy for reducing child poverty.

38. A ministerial committee had recently been formed that would report every six months on the issue of child poverty.

39. **Mr. Smith** (New Zealand) said that New Zealand law established no specific minimum age for admission to work. However, the existing legal framework provided ample protection against exploitative or excessive employment: the Education Act required children to remain in school until the age of 16, with only a few limited exemptions, and prohibited the employment of minors aged under 16 during school hours; the Health and Safety in Employment Regulations restricted access to dangerous workplaces for children under 15 and prohibited night work for children under 16; the Prostitution Reform Act made it an offence to organize or receive sexual services from minors; and the Sale of Liquor Act banned the sale of alcohol on licensed premises to persons aged under 18. Although around 40 per cent of school-aged children were engaged in regular part-time work according to research, that work was generally safe and reasonably paid, hours were modest and there was no evidence of any adverse impact on school performance.

40. **Mr. Keith** (New Zealand) said that key indicators of Maori health, including overall life expectancy, had improved over the past two decades and the gap relative to national averages had closed measurably. Child immunization rates in Maori communities continued to rise and had recently surpassed the 2005 national average. District health boards had a legal obligation to improve health outcomes for Maori and other disadvantaged groups under the 2000 Public Health and Disability Act and under a 2011 amendment were required to report periodically on a set of 15 specific health-care indicators and to tie key measures adopted to reduce disparities to improvements in those indicators.

41. **Mr. Schrijver** said that his concern related less to the impact of employment on school performance than to the correlation between the relatively high school dropout rate and the incidence of child labour, notably in the informal economy.

42. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** said that he would appreciate more information about taxation and its impact on income equality and enjoyment of the right to an adequate standard of living, as well as information about the consumer price index.

43. **Ms. Shin** Heisoo asked for information about the Social Security Amendment Bill currently before parliament. Reports suggested that the bill sought to apply blanket age and family status criteria for welfare eligibility that could be discriminatory in their effect on young people, especially Maori women with young children. She advocated a rights-based approach based on an individual assessment of needs.

44. **Mr. Keith** (New Zealand) said that the school dropout rate had declined markedly since 2008 and that at present 84 per cent of 17-year-olds remained in school. Exceptions from the statutory school leaving age of 16 were permitted only when the teenagers concerned intended to pursue some other form of training, such as an apprenticeship, for at least six months. An enhanced truancy service worked intensively to address the underlying causes with families, schools and welfare agencies and had succeeded in reducing under- and non-attendance. There were also a number of schemes that addressed disengagement with the school system among teenagers by fostering self-esteem and cultural identity.

45. **Ms. Power** (New Zealand) said that the Social Security Amendment Bill currently under consideration would affect only a small group of people that the Government considered to be particularly vulnerable – namely young people, many of them teenage parents, who had been expelled from the family environment. The Government believed that the severe risk of long-term dependency and exclusion to which those teenagers were exposed justified the strictness of the proposed measures, although she recognized that they ran counter to the views of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In any case, a less rigid regime would be applied to teenagers who proved their ability to manage money and regularly attended parenting courses.

Articles 13 to 15

46. **Mr. Marchán Romero** asked whether the delegation had more detailed information regarding the timeline for issuance of the recommendations resulting from the Wai 262 Inquiry and whether the Government's decision to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples would have a bearing on their implementation. He also wished to highlight an apparent contradiction in the Government's cultural policy. Although paragraph 640 of the report stated that non-interventionism was favoured, it could be inferred from the section concerning the South Pacific territory of Tokelau that, in instilling the imported notion of individuality, the Government was fostering a divergence from traditional values and the collective rights recognized under the United Nations Declaration.

47. **Mr. Kerdoun** said the report indicated that the high school dropout rate was a problem almost exclusively confined to the Maori and Pacific population. It further emphasized the disparity between those groups and the European population and it appeared that the various measures adopted to address that issue had failed to bring about any demonstrable improvement. He would therefore like to know whether the delegation had any evidence that the various initiatives were achieving the desired end and whether the State party's overall policy for preventing early school dropout was considered to be successful.

48. He also sought the delegation's opinion as to why educational achievement was generally inferior among Maori and Pacific students and why those students were more likely to leave school prematurely. Was it because they were poorly integrated and, if so, what was the reason for that situation? Was the use of indigenous languages an obstacle? Greater detail about the New Zealand Curriculum introduced in February 2010 and its impact would also be welcome. Lastly, noting that the Te Whāriki early childhood education curriculum apparently encompassed the idea of human rights education, he asked when the curriculum had been introduced, how human rights principles were imparted to young children in practice and whether their inclusion had had any demonstrable impact.

49. **Ms. Shin** Heisoo asked whether bullying in school was a pressing social issue in New Zealand and, if so, whether any research into its scale and causes had been conducted.

50. **Mr. Abashidze** said he was concerned that the Office of Ethnic Affairs appeared to be clustering population groups in a way that was racial rather than ethnic. He would like to know whether the Office also maintained statistics about specific ethnic groups, whether there were any specific laws or programmes guaranteeing that such groups were able to exercise their cultural rights, and whether there was any system allowing for budget resources to be assigned to individual ethnic groups.

51. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** said that the figures for educational expenditure provided in paragraph 556 of the report indicated that, while absolute expenditure had almost doubled in the past decade, in percentage terms it had risen by less than 2 per cent. The figures for expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product also revealed only a very meagre

percentage increase. Given that the increases were insufficient, he wondered whether he had correctly interpreted the figures.

52. He was also concerned by the report's lack of information about the cost of education. Figures showing the number of private schools and universities in relation to the number of State institutions would have been useful in that connection, since if the private sector expanded while the number of State schools fell in relative terms, education inevitably became less affordable. He would appreciate the delegation's comments on those observations, as well as clarification regarding an apparent contradiction in paragraph 594, which stated that scholarships were available to cover the first \$3,000 students' annual fees but that recipients must meet the first \$1,000 of course costs each year.

53. **Mr. Keith** (New Zealand) said that the Waitangi Tribunal's report on the Wai 262 Inquiry had been released in July 2011. As the 700-page report set forth numerous far-reaching findings and recommendations, the Government would need time to work through its content and issue a formal response. Although the report largely predated the New Zealand Government's decision to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Declaration was invoked as a source document in the report and was clearly relevant to the manner in which cultural rights were construed in theory and in practice.

54. In his view, there was no contradiction between the long-standing collective perspective of Tokelauan tradition and the relatively new individual rights-based perspective advocated under international human rights law. It was simply a question of reconciling the Tokelauan perspective on law and social order, pursuant to which individuals owed a duty to their community, with the State party's parallel obligation to guarantee all its citizens the full spectrum of human rights. That process of reconciliation was a central element of the ongoing transition towards greater autonomy for the territory.

55. Most education in New Zealand was either public or publicly funded. A number of schools, especially at the preschool level, were privately owned but had most, if not all, of their operating costs met by the State. There had been no significant increase in private provision in recent years. In fact, the economic downturn had placed a number of private schools in difficulty and there had been moves to bring some of those struggling schools into the State system. There were no private universities and the State met most of the operating costs of the country's small contingent of privately owned tertiary education providers.

56. There were a number of scholarship schemes to facilitate access to further education, although he believed that the scheme mentioned by Mr. Abdel-Moneim no longer operated. For example, medical students could receive scholarship funding provided that they agreed to work in rural communities for a certain time after graduation. However, living costs were covered mainly by means-tested student allowances. Student loans on preferential terms were also available. The educational costs that students were required to meet themselves through direct payments or loans were on average one third of the total outlay.

57. Human rights principles had been a component of the Te Whāriki early childhood education curriculum since 1996. Each individual institution was free to decide how that requirement should be met in practice, although activities based around diversity and differing needs were usually a key tool. The importance accorded to human rights was reflected in the training that preschool staff must complete in order to obtain the requisite qualifications.

58. Although in percentage terms Government expenditure on education had increased by only a small margin, the dollar figure for absolute expenditure equated to an increase of approximately 50 per cent in inflation-adjusted terms and thus represented a significant rise in purchasing power.

59. **Mr. Power** (New Zealand) said that bullying was a major problem in New Zealand and that the country had suffered a number of tragic bullying-related suicides. The \$62 million mental health package for young people that the Prime Minister had recently announced should secure the support and assistance that was undoubtedly needed.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.