No summary record was issued for the 13th meeting.

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Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.
The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports (continued)

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

Fifth periodic report of Mauritius (E/C.12/MUS/5; E/C.12/MUS/Q/5 and E/C.12/MUS/Q/5/Add.1)

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

2. Mr. Gobin (Mauritius), noting that economic prosperity contributed significantly to a State’s ability to fulfil its obligations under the Covenant, said that Mauritius ranked twentieth out of 190 economies in 2018 on the World Bank’s ease of doing business index, up from twenty-fifth in 2017. The Government was investing heavily in infrastructure, with the goal of transforming Mauritius into an inclusive high-income country. The first phase of a light rail transit system was due to open in September 2019, and public road transport infrastructure was being modernized. A new runway on Rodrigues Island was being planned to accommodate larger aeroplanes, and 5 billion Mauritian rupees had been set aside in the current budget for the island's socioeconomic development. The Mauritius-Rodrigues submarine cable, the first fibre-optic cable linking the two islands, was now fully operational and, in September 2018, Agalega island (approximately 1,000 km north of Mauritius) had obtained access to the Internet for the first time, using satellite bandwidth. A new runway and jetty on Agalega island were also being built.

3. The Government’s main priorities included attracting foreign direct investment, creating jobs, providing growth opportunities through financial or fiscal incentives, consolidating bilateral agreements and partnerships with other countries and opening the economy up to new markets. In recognition of the key role of small and medium-sized enterprises in socioeconomic development, a 10-year master plan had been prepared to boost their competitiveness and growth. Measures such as a strategic plan for the food-crop, livestock and forestry sectors for 2016–2020 aimed to empower producers, enhance the welfare of the farming community and ensure national food security and safety in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. Fundamental changes in the human rights framework since the last review by the Committee, in 2010, had included the creation in September 2017 of a new ministry dedicated to human rights and the launch in December 2017 of a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up, which had since become a platform for regular consultations with civil society. The Independent Police Complaints Commission had become fully operational in April 2018, and legislation adopted in 2017 authorized police officers to form trade unions. Mauritius was up to date with its international reporting obligations. It had ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) with reservations in June 2017 and, in 2018, had acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty in July 2015 and to Protocols II and V to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects in 2018. It expected to ratify the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide shortly.

5. A negative income tax scheme had been introduced in 2017 to provide financial assistance to some 30,000 low-income workers each month, and the national minimum wage of 8,140 Mauritian rupees per month had been payable to all full-time workers since January 2018. Those measures had impacted positively on the wages of some 100,000 workers. Major steps taken to address absolute poverty under the Marshall Plan had included the introduction of a social contract scheme under which 11,000 households – 38 per cent of which were female-headed – were receiving a monthly subsistence allowance, and the provision of educational support in the form of school bags, uniforms and stationery to 20,000 eligible students at the pre-primary, primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary levels. A number of government schemes provided housing support to vulnerable and low-income families,
including through a major social housing programme under which the construction of 10,000 housing units was planned.

6. A third of the government budget was devoted to social protection. The Government had significantly enhanced universal non-contributory basic pensions for older persons, widows, persons with disabilities and orphans. Between December 2014 and January 2019, the basic retirement pension had increased by 70 per cent from 3,623 rupees to 6,210 rupees per month. Free medical services and home visits were provided to all persons over the age of 89 years and to all bedridden persons over the age of 75 years. Older persons benefited from free public transport and leisure facilities in day-care and recreational centres. In July 2016, the Government had removed the previous discriminatory provision that only children with disabilities over the age of 15 years were entitled to receive the basic invalidity pension; now some 3,000 children with disabilities were receiving the pension of 6,210 rupees per month. Children who were confined to bed also received a monthly carer’s allowance of 3,000 rupees.

7. Mauritius was a State party to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and had incorporated its philosophy and principles into the Employment Rights Act. That Act had been amended in 2015 to increase maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks and, in August 2018, eligibility for maternity leave had been extended to women with less than 12 months’ continuous service, in the private and public sectors. Men were entitled to five days’ paternity leave. The Equal Opportunities Act had been amended in 2017 to prohibit employment discrimination on the grounds of criminal record, for both recruitment and promotion. Some 21,600 young people had begun work between 2013 and November 2018 through the Youth Employment Programme, and a scheme introduced in 2018 targeted 1,000 unemployed graduates.

8. The Protection from Domestic Violence Act had been amended in 2016 to widen the definition of the offence, and a rehabilitation programme for perpetrators had been introduced in 2018. The provisions of the Protection of Elderly Persons Act had been strengthened in 2016. In 2018, Mauritius had joined the call to action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, and a draft national action plan to combat trafficking in persons was currently being finalized. A pamphlet entitled “Know your rights” was due to be published in several languages in March 2019; it aimed at informing migrant workers employed in secondary economic activities of their rights, of remedies in case of violation and of the dangers of human trafficking. The Criminal Code had been amended in 2018 to prohibit hate speech by electronic means and to increase the applicable penalties.

9. A commission of inquiry on drug trafficking set up in 2015 had submitted its report in July 2018; some recommendations had already been implemented and others, requiring amendments to legislation, were being examined. A national drug control master plan for 2018–2022 was being finalized, a council on HIV and drugs had been set up early in 2019 and a dedicated youth centre had been opened in August 2018 to tackle the increasing trend of synthetic drug use among young people by providing detoxification and rehabilitation services.

10. Health care was provided free of charge. The Government was investing heavily in the sector, with new state-of-the-art specialist hospitals and centres in advanced stages of planning and completion. Non-communicable diseases remained a major concern, and services in the areas of prevention, early detection, treatment and prevention of complications had been developed. HIV prevalence had been kept under 1 per cent. Some 700,000 needles were distributed annually to drug users to prevent HIV infection, in line with a national action plan for 2017–2021 aimed at zero new HIV infections, zero AIDS-related deaths and zero discrimination.

11. Education was compulsory to the age of 16 years and free at the primary and secondary levels. In January 2019, the Prime Minister had announced that tertiary education would also be free. The Certificate of Primary Education examination, which had raised concerns in the past owing to negative student experiences, had been replaced in 2018 with a new form of assessment leading to the Primary School Achievement Certificate. The Nine Years of Continuous Basic Education programme, introduced in January 2017, aimed at providing an alternative learning environment and laying a strong foundation on which to
build future learning. As part of the concept of inclusive education, the Special Education Needs Authority had been established to ensure the best opportunities for children with disabilities and their integration into mainstream education.

12. To promote the cultural sector, the Government provided grants to 11 speaking unions and five cultural centres, with a view to promoting intercultural dialogue, fostering mutual cultural understanding and safeguarding cultural heritage through languages. A project to open an intercontinental slavery museum was under way in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Sega Tambour of Rodrigues Island, Bhojpuri folk songs (Geet-Gawai) and traditional Mauritian Sega had been included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2017, 2016 and 2014 respectively.

13. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to complete the planned amendment of the Constitution to enshrine economic, social and cultural rights on an equal footing with other constitutional rights. The Government was nevertheless envisaging ways in which to give the Covenant legal status and enable its provisions to be incorporated into domestic legislation, and was considering the advisability of including its provisions under the Protection of Human Rights Act. It was engaging with the relevant stakeholders, including non-State actors, with a view to achieving progress on that front.

14. He welcomed the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, which had just been issued. The advisory opinion would go a long way towards ensuring that Mauritian citizens of Chagossian origin could fully enjoy their fundamental human rights, including the right to self-determination as enshrined in article 1 of the Covenant.

15. Mr. De Schutter (Country Rapporteur) said that he also welcomed the advisory opinion, which had been issued by the International Criminal Court with only one dissenting voice and which showed the importance of human rights and the power of the international community to ensure that they were respected. It was hoped that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland would follow up on that advisory opinion.

16. On the applicability of the Covenant in the State party’s domestic legal order, he said that he understood from the National Human Rights Action Plan (2012–2020) that the State party planned to select for inclusion in the Protection of Human Rights Act only those provisions of the Covenant that lent themselves to being domestically reinforced by the courts. In its general comments No. 3 (1990), on the nature of States parties’ obligations, and No. 9 (1998), on the domestic application of the Covenant, the Committee had emphasized that it was the duty of States parties to demonstrate that judicial remedies for violations of rights under the Covenant were not appropriate means of ensuring the protection of those rights. The presumption was that it should be possible to invoke all the rights of the Covenant before domestic courts. He therefore hoped that, in the preparation of the Protection of Human Rights Act, a generous reading would be given to the Covenant and to its ability to be enforced by the domestic courts. He would like the State party to comment on the prospects for ratification of the Optional Protocol.

17. Noting that, in 2014, the National Human Rights Commission had been granted A status by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, he wondered how the State party intended to follow up on the Subcommittee’s recommendations with regard to the Commission’s ability to deal with economic, social and cultural rights, since its mandate did not currently explicitly cover those rights. He would like to know whether the State party intended to act on the repeated recommendations of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations that the Public Procurement Act should be amended to require the inclusion of a provision that contractors must monitor their subcontractors for compliance with labour rights, in accordance with the Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 (No. 94).

18. On the duty under article 2 (1) of the Covenant to dedicate the maximum available resources to the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights, and referring to a concern expressed by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in its concluding observations following its recent consideration of the State
party’s report (CEDAW/C/MUS/CO/8, para. 29 (d)), he said he wondered whether the rise in the State party’s rank in the ease of doing business index risked depriving other States of their ability to attract their own investment. Was there a risk that, in the name of attracting foreign investors, economic, social and cultural rights were being set aside, or at least that States’ ability to collect enough resources to fund public services was reduced?

19. On non-discrimination in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, under article 2 (2) of the Covenant, he would like to know whether the State party intended to amend the Equal Opportunities Act to broaden the prohibition of discrimination in the context of the provision of housing to privately rented accommodation. He would also like to know whether the State party planned to extend the overly restrictive list of prohibited grounds for discrimination in that Act to include social origin and property – as detailed in the Committee’s general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights – and to gender identity, given that transgender persons were not currently covered. He furthermore wondered whether the State party intended to expand the protection of same-sex couples beyond the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, given that there was no recognition of non-heterosexual couples in society and no provision for same-sex marriage or for any other legal protection of same-sex couples, such as in the contexts of housing or inheritance rights.

20. The Committee had received information that the Malaise Creole minority group, who made up a quarter of the population, suffered structural discrimination in a range of contexts including employment, housing and education; he would therefore like to know whether the State party intended to take affirmative action measures to improve the situation of that minority group. Noting that, as he understood it, section 13 of the Equal Opportunities Act implied that an employer had a duty to provide reasonable accommodation to a person with a disability who was applying for a job or seeking a promotion, he said that it would be useful to know whether that employer was compensated in part or in full for the costs incurred. He would be interested to know whether section 13 applied to all sectors of employment, including the private sector, and, if so, how the burden was assessed in the private sector. Was there any duty of reasonable accommodation in contexts other than employment, which were not covered by section 13, such as the provision of services, education, housing and transport?

21. He would like to know whether the State party intended to ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954), and whether in the interim it intended to improve protection of refugees and asylum seekers from refoulement in line with the Committee’s statement on the duties of States towards refugees and migrants under the Covenant.

22. He said he would like to hear the State party’s comments on the modern-day legitimacy of section 250 of the Criminal Code, specifically the heading “sodomy and bestiality”, under which same-sex relations were established as an offence and asked within what time frame it might be considered for removal.

23. Noting the persistence of a significant wage gap between women and men – women’s earnings were only 57 per cent of that of men – despite the prohibition of indirect discrimination in the Equal Opportunities Act, he said that he wondered whether the State party intended to follow up on the recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2018 to adopt temporary special measures to strengthen the position of women in employment, and how it intended to enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, particularly in the agricultural sector and the sugar and tea industries, where the wage gap was particularly large.

24. Mr. Gobin (Mauritius) said that it would be difficult to incorporate the Covenant in the domestic legal order by means of a constitutional amendment; a more straightforward option might be to do so through the amendment of the Protection of Human Rights Act. Noting that adopting such an approach would have an impact on the duties of the National Human Rights Commission, he said that the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms was working with the Commission and other stakeholders to consider the advisability of such an approach. He was confident that the Covenant’s provisions would eventually become part of the domestic legal order.
25. The Government was currently working on a bill that would provide broader protection for persons with disabilities. The Government’s position on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons was that legislative reforms should be carried out only once the Mauritian population had arrived at a general consensus on the need for laws to protect such rights. The Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms had engaged in a constructive dialogue with the Equality and Justice Alliance, a group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active within the Commonwealth, with a view to preparing Mauritian society to accept such measures, taking into account the country’s cultural and religious specificities. Mauritius had been the first Commonwealth country to request technical assistance and to receive aid from the Alliance. At the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, held in 2018, a programme had been announced with the aim of reviewing and reforming outdated colonial laws, and in January 2019 a number of Governments had sent representatives to Cape Town, South Africa, for an event to review best practices for the adoption of legislative reforms. The Government would report to various international forums, including the upcoming universal periodic review conducted by the Human Rights Council, on progress made towards securing reform.

26. The Government of Mauritius maintained that, in view of the country’s size, population density and limited resources, it should not accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons that Mauritius nonetheless adhered to a policy of non-refoulement and maintained close relations with the local representation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Pretoria. Asylum applications were processed in Mauritius and temporary accommodation was provided to asylum seekers until third States accepted them for resettlement, subject to the conditions applied by UNHCR.

27. The national legislation included provisions ensuring equal pay for work of equal value. The law made absolutely no allowance for any gender discrimination in wages, and such discrimination was not tolerated in any sector. The sugar, tea and salt production industries were subject to sectoral regulations. Any perceived gender wage differences were attributable to differences in the inherent requirements of the jobs and tasks generally done by men and women and should not be considered discriminatory.

28. Mr. Sadi said that he would like more detailed information on the relevance of the Covenant in the law and practice in Mauritius. The delegation might also explain whether, its view, incorporating the Covenant into domestic law would require adaptation of the national law or could simply involve the invocation in practice of the Covenant’s provisions. He would like to know whether the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms acted as a national human rights institution and, if so, to what extent it was independent of the Government and able to comply with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). The Committee would also appreciate information on the extent to which its general comments were taken into consideration by the State party.

29. Ms. Shin said that the delegation’s accounting for gender disparities in remuneration appeared to be based on a social evaluation of tasks associated with men and women. While welcoming the adoption of a law in 2017 that established the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, she hoped that the State party would take into consideration the need to develop structures to compare work of different types and to encourage equal remuneration in practice.

30. Mr. De Schutter, referring to the large surpluses in the State budget in recent years and to the requirement of States parties to the Covenant to make use of the maximum available resources for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, asked whether the Government might consider devoting more resources to the implementation of the Covenant.

31. Mr. Gobin (Mauritius) said that the use of budget resources was always subject to scrutiny and was largely dependent on line items adopted for specific projects. The incorporation of the Covenant’s provisions into domestic law was understood to mean the parliamentary adoption of legislation that would be fully applicable in the country and justiciable in its courts. The Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms was
a ministry under the authority of the Government that served as a focal point for government policy related to human rights, which required continuous collaboration with other government ministries. The Ministry, acting on a recommendation from the local representation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Pretoria had established the National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up, which coordinated the action of State bodies and civil society organizations. The National Human Rights Commission, on the other hand, was independent of the Government and operated in accordance with the Paris Principles.

32. **Ms. Shin** said that the Committee would like to know how the Government assessed the effectiveness of the Youth Employment Programme, the Back to Work Programme and the Dual Training Programme in terms of reducing youth unemployment, and whether the Employment Rights Act was applicable to persons covered by those programmes. Were the programmes basically financial subsidies paid to employers, and if so, was there a risk of abuse? Noting that the female labour participation rate was under 40 per cent and that the unemployment rate for women was twice as high as it was for men, she asked what steps were being taken to encourage female employment. The Committee would like to receive more specific information on the functioning in practice of flexible work schemes such as the “work from home” arrangement and would like to know whether such flexible work arrangements were available to fathers. It would also be useful to know the level of remuneration provided during maternity leave and whether the Government had plans to introduce parental leave for both mothers and fathers. If parental leave was already available for fathers, how many actually made use of it?

33. Noting that the quota for the employment of persons with disabilities was applicable only in the private sector and applied only to employers with 35 or more workers, she asked whether the quota would be extended to cover the public sector and what measures were taken to ensure its enforcement. The Committee would like more information on measures taken to provide reasonable accommodation and accessibility for persons with disabilities and on the Government’s long-term plan to meet demand in the labour market for skilled workers. It would be interesting to learn about the methodology used by the National Wage Consultative Council and the National Remuneration Board in establishing the minimum wage and to hear whether it was periodically reviewed and was sufficient to support a decent standard of living. Specifically, it would be useful to know why there was a separate minimum wage applicable for export enterprises; she wondered whether there was a resulting danger of exploitation of workers in such companies. Citing a call by the World Bank for simplified and enforceable minimum wage policies in order to ensure better protection of low-wage workers, she said it would be interesting to hear the State party’s views on that position. She would like to know what steps the State party planned to take to address the gender pay gap, which appeared to be attributable in large part to occupational gender segregation. The situation of domestic workers was of concern, as the Committee had received reports of termination of employment and the non-payment of salaries. While welcoming the increase in the number of inspectors assigned to monitor the situation of domestic workers, she said it was a cause for concern that such inspectors were unable to enter private homes, which was where domestic workers carried out their work.

34. While many migrant workers were now able to take part in the national pension scheme, those working in export manufacturing enterprises were allegedly excluded for their first two years of contracts. She would like to know whether the Government intended to change that provision. Migrant workers had reportedly been subjected to passport confiscation, underpayment of wages, substandard living conditions, denial of allowances, deportation and termination in the event of pregnancy. It would be useful to know how the protection of their rights was monitored and whether exploitative employers face prosecution. The Committee would appreciate information about the legal framework prohibiting sexual harassment at the workplace and about any research into the prevalence of such harassment. She would like to know whether the mandate of labour inspectors covered workers in the informal sector and those engaged in activities on rural farms.

35. While she welcomed the adoption of new legislation allowing police officers to form trade unions, she was nonetheless concerned at the strict limitations of the rights under article 8 with regard to migrant workers and workers in export processing areas and at the
harassment and other unfair treatment of union leaders. She wished to know what steps were being taken to address the situation. Concerning social security, she would be grateful to know what the system’s scope of coverage was, what percentage of people needed social assistance, whether the basic retirement pension was sufficient, what social assistance was available to persons with disabilities of all ages and what assistance was available for foreign nationals in situations of vulnerability.

36. **Mr. Gobin** (Mauritius) said that the rights of migrant workers were very high on the Government’s agenda as a result of the numerous recommendations made by various agencies. A booklet titled “Know Your Rights” had been prepared to inform migrant workers of their rights. It would be published in English, French, Hindi, Bangla, Mandarin and Tamil and would be distributed at immigration counters, workplaces and accommodation for migrant workers. Another measure envisaged to protect migrant workers was to eliminate recruiting agents, who were sometimes responsible for abuse. Memorandums of understanding in this regard were being discussed with the authorities of Bangladesh, India and Nepal. In addition to the workplace inspections carried out by the Labour Inspector, the Health Inspector conducted checks at migrant worker accommodation. He was aware of cases where domestic workers had been paid less than expected or not at all; however, no action could be taken unless a domestic worker lodged a formal complaint with any of the labour officers posted across the island.

37. Mauritius was not offering fathers parental leave at the present time, but it was open to considering the idea. Meeting the employment quota for persons with disabilities was a challenge in the public and private sectors alike and required, in addition to enacting laws, outreach work with employers. The first-ever report on the impact of the minimum wage prepared by the National Wage Consultative Council would answer all the Committee’s questions regarding the minimum wage and would be provided to it once published. The work from home scheme was so recent that data on its implementation and results had yet to be gathered. The basic retirement pension was universal and, thanks to links with the civil registry, began to be disbursed when a person reached the requisite age. Disability allowances were application-based and required an assessment by a medical practitioner.

38. **Mr. De Schutter** said that he would be interested to know whether, given the evolving family structure, the State party might consider extending the five-day paternity leave to unmarried fathers. He wished to know whether there were plans to enable workers to continue accruing pension points while on extended unpaid leave to discharge family obligations, thereby ending a situation that disproportionately discriminated against women, in violation of the Covenant.

39. **Ms. Shin** asked whether the three youth employment programmes came under the Employment Rights Act and whether the social perception of sharing family responsibilities was changing.

40. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim**, referring to the principle of maximum available resources, said that he would appreciate the delegation’s comments on how the recent advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 would affect the State party’s approach to its inhabitants of Chagossian origin.

41. **Mr. Gobin** (Mauritius) said that sexual harassment was an offence under national law. One of the preferred means of tackling the issue was through awareness-raising. To that end, the relevant ministry was collaborating with NGOs on a series of video clips, including one specifically on workplace harassment, to be posted on social media, broadcast on national television and shown in schools. Regarding the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, Mauritius would have to work with the General Assembly on the modalities of resettlement for Mauritian nationals of Chagossian origin and on how to achieve the full realization of their rights.

42. **Ms. Liebenberg** (Country Task Force), referring to the report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons on her 2015 visit to Mauritius, said that it would help provide a clearer picture of the legal and factual situation of older persons to know what obligation the various entities had to report cases of abuse, especially in residential care homes; whether any cases of abuse had been successfully prosecuted; how
often such homes were inspected; how the State party was addressing the issue of unregistered private care facilities and the lack of training for caregivers; and what steps were being taken to offset social prejudice against older persons and how effective they were. She wished to know what progress had been made on establishing marital rape as an offence, whether data was available on the application of sections 4 to 8 of the Domestic Violence Act to ensure victims of domestic violence did not lose their home and what steps were being taken to raise women’s awareness of the relevant legal provisions and ensure they received the legal assistance they needed. It would be interesting to know what progress had been made in follow-up to the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding child marriage and the protection of women’s rights in the context of unregistered marriages. She would appreciate information on the specific measures taken to reduce poverty on Rodrigues Island, in particular among the Creole population and what the current status and main achievements were of the Poverty Observatory and the Marshall Plan.

43. It would be helpful to know more about how individuals were registered on the Social Register of Mauritius, which provided for a monthly subsistence allowance. Specifically, she wished to know how the Government ensured the inclusion of the poorest and least informed persons if registration occurred at the individual’s request, and how it ensured that eligible candidates were not excluded owing to a lack of regular address or identity documents if registration was carried out by the authorities or social services. Approximately how many people were eligible for the Register, what percentage of them were registered, and what were the Government’s targets for the Register for the next five years?

44. Moreover, she would appreciate information on the application of the conditions for receipt of the subsistence allowance, and whether the conditions, which covered areas including education and employment, could be prohibitive. As a large proportion of recipients were female-headed households, it would be useful to know how the conditions could avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes by placing the burden of family welfare on women.

45. Many housing estates suffered from issues including poor sanitary facilities and a lack of community services. In view of the absence of statistics on the extent of housing problems, she wished to know the percentage of the population that the Government regarded as homeless or living in substandard housing. Secondly, she wished to know how the National Housing Programme 2015–2019 had contributed to addressing homelessness and inadequate housing, and how the Government would tackle those issues over the next five years. It would be useful to know what measures the Government was taking to ensure that social housing programmes did not reinforce the de facto ethnic segregation of poor and marginalized groups, which particularly affected the Creole population on the island of Rodrigues. How did the Government’s planning policy promote integrated housing developments?

46. She would welcome clarification of the size of the private health-care sector and the proportion of the population it catered for. It would also be helpful to know what measures were in place to prevent the development of a dual-track health-care system and the erosion of the public health-care sector through, for example, medical practitioners’ migrating to the private sector.

47. It would be useful to know what measures were being taken to improve screening processes for non-communicable diseases and to increase the relatively low rate of coverage of screening programmes. She also wished to know what specific measures were being taken to discourage alcohol consumption and to promote awareness of the harms of alcohol abuse.

48. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Mauritius had a high prevalence of psychiatric conditions, yet the country had only 1.6 psychiatrists per 1,000 people. It would be helpful to learn of any measures to increase the number of psychiatric health-care practitioners, and to improve public awareness of mental health care and reduce the stigma associated with it.

49. The rate of HIV was particularly high among men and people who used drugs. She wished to know how the criminalization of same-sex relations affected the ability of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community to access HIV/AIDS treatment
programmes, and what measures were being taken to reduce stigma and prejudice that could discourage members of that community from gaining access to treatment.

50. Recalling that approximately 9,000 people were living with hepatitis C virus, including over 95 per cent of people who injected drugs, it would be useful to know how the Government was improving access to relevant information, diagnosis and treatment. She would also like to know the current capacity of laboratories to run diagnostic tests.

51. While recognizing that the Government had made significant progress towards addressing drug abuse, she said that it would be useful to learn whether the monthly quota of needles available under the Needle Exchange Programme was sufficient to meet demand, what harm reduction programmes were available to minors ineligible for opioid substitution programmes, and whether there was any research into the impact of the strict criminalization of drug use on harm reduction strategies. In addition, it would be useful to know what recommendations had been made by the Commission of Inquiry on drug trafficking and what action had been taken subsequently.

52. Mr. Gobin (Mauritius) said that the Commission of Inquiry had published its report in July 2018, demonstrating the Government’s commitment to transparency. A number of recommendations had been made and were being considered at the highest levels of Government.

53. The country’s doctor-population ratio exceeded the figure recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). The rapidly expanding private health-care sector provided services to approximately 20 per cent of the population, although some services and treatments, including neonatal care, open-heart surgery and renal dialysis, were available only in the public health-care sector. Unfortunately, treatment of hepatitis C and the capacity of laboratories to test for it were hindered by the high cost of drugs.

54. The registration of households in the Social Register was ongoing. New housing estates had been built to increase the size of houses and to improve the standard of services and the quality of life. In addition, the National Housing Development Company Ltd was inspecting older housing estates with a view to repossessing unoccupied units so that they could be rented out. The Company had measures in place to prevent de facto ethnic segregation.

55. There were a number of targeted programmes for Rodrigues, including some under the island’s Regional Assembly. Funding was being finalized for a number of major infrastructure projects; in particular, the new runway would contribute to economic growth by expanding the tourist sector, although the island’s topography presented some logistical challenges to construction.

56. Victims of domestic violence were given access free legal assistance under an existing scheme. Moreover, the discussion of recommendations received from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was ongoing. All recommendations received from human rights treaty bodies were disseminated to NGOs and civil society organizations in order to receive feedback.

57. In recent years, there had been outreach programmes for the early detection of non-communicable diseases. The necessary equipment was taken to villages to conduct screenings for diabetes, high blood pressure and some cancers. Patients could then be referred to hospitals for further testing where necessary.

58. Mr. Abashidze (Country Task Force) said that although Mauritian Creole was the first language of approximately 85 per cent of the population, it remained an optional subject in schools and was rarely the language of instruction, despite progress in promoting and facilitating its use in primary and secondary education. He would appreciate information on the high dropout rate among Creole-speaking children.

59. Given the availability of free public education, it would be useful to know why some families chose to pay for private schooling. He also wished to know whether the amendments to the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority Act on compulsory primary education had been adopted, and why so many children had failed to obtain the Certificate of Primary Education in the past. It would be helpful to hear about any government measures to increase
opportunities for women and girls in technical and vocational educational institutions, where approximately 70 per cent of students were male.

60. He would welcome information on the legislative framework for scientific research, and on measures to ensure that the entire population was able to benefit from scientific progress. Lastly, he wished to know why the Creole community, unlike the Hindu, Muslim and Sino-Mauritian communities, did not enjoy widespread recognition as a separate community.

61. Mr. De Schutter said that it would be useful to have further information on inclusive education and access to education for children with disabilities, in view of the reliance on NGOs to provide teacher training and special services for those children.

62. Ms. Shin said that she would appreciate further contextual information as well as data. For example, statistics relating to sexual harassment could be accompanied by information about relevant policies or surveys conducted on the scale of the problem, particularly in view of the reluctance among some groups to report incidents.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*