Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Sixty-sixth session

Summary record of the 39th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 4 October 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Zerbini Ribeiro Leão

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports (continued)

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

Fourth periodic report of Ecuador (continued) (E/C.12/ECU/4; E/C.12/ECU/Q/4 and E/C.12/ECU/Q/4/Add.1)

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

2. Mr. Mancisidor de la Fuente (Country Rapporteur), noting that a 60-day state of emergency had been declared in the State party the previous day, said that he wished to know whether citizens would continue to enjoy the freedoms of assembly, association and movement during the state of emergency and whether the risk posed to the security and integrity of the State was sufficient to justify the action taken. The Committee would welcome information about the expected impact of the state of emergency on the Government’s efforts to promote social and political rights in accordance with the agreement established between the State party and the International Monetary Fund. It would also be interesting to learn what impact the state of emergency was likely to have on the State party’s treaty obligations, including its obligations under the Covenant.

3. Ms. Chacón Castillo (Ecuador) said that the President strove to develop democratic policies that were respectful of human rights while ensuring the future economic sustainability of the country. The decisions taken in that regard involved structural and fiscal adjustments, as well as situations of social unrest and the participation of citizens in accordance with the principle of resistance, which was enshrined in the Constitution. The economic measures taken by the Government were aimed at enhancing the transparency with which the country’s economy was managed.

4. The state of emergency had been declared in order to ensure that citizens and goods could continue to circulate freely. It was intended not to restrict any rights or freedoms but to coordinate the work of the police and the armed forces, who were working to protect property and citizens and prevent activities that undermined the peace of the nation. In response to the threats posed to public order, which included attempts to shut down the public transport system, the President, acting pursuant to article 164 of the Constitution, had declared the whole of the national territory to be a security zone. During the state of emergency, efforts would be made to protect vital infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and health centres, and ensure that they continued to operate. As the Secretary of State had explained, measures were being taken to prevent food and fuel shortages, curb the spread of violence and ensure that commercial premises remained open. The police and the armed forces would enforce the state of emergency in order to restore law and order as soon as possible. Although the right to freedom of association would be upheld, groups of protesters would not be permitted to commit acts of vandalism or block access to commercial and public services. The Government had no intention of maintaining the state of emergency for any longer than was strictly necessary for order to be restored.

5. Ms. Suárez (Ecuador) said that the right to freedom of association and assembly would be suspended only during the first 24 hours of the state of emergency. Furthermore, the restriction of that right would apply only to certain public places and only to the types of gatherings and acts that had led to the declaration of the state of emergency. The Office of the President, the legislative branch and the Constitutional Court would determine and monitor the manner and extent to which the restriction was implemented. The restriction would not apply to vehicles belonging to the public transport system or those responsible for providing State services. Searches could be conducted only if prior authorization was obtained and subsequent justification was provided. Although the state of emergency had been declared for a period of 60 days, the President was empowered to end it earlier than anticipated.

6. Ms. Chacón Castillo (Ecuador) said that the Government was committed to upholding citizen participation, social harmony and good governance. The unrest that was
taking place in Ecuador had been caused by persons who were using the country’s economic difficulties as an excuse for engaging in acts of violence and vandalism. The previous day, the police had been forced to intervene when a mob had thrown stones at an ambulance whose crew were attempting to carry out their jobs. The state of emergency had been declared in order to ensure that acts of that kind were not repeated. In the face of the unrest, the President would resolutely continue to carry out economic reforms and enhance the transparency with which the country’s economy was managed. Although some political stakeholders welcomed the reforms being carried out, others were now criticizing them despite having previously acknowledged them as necessary. The President had had the courage to initiate the reforms and would ensure that the state of emergency was implemented in accordance with respect for human rights.

7. The Government recognized that acts of violence against women and girls constituted violations of their human rights. In order to implement the Comprehensive Organic Act on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women, the Government had established the National System for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and had set up technical committees responsible for establishing a single registry on acts of violence and related prevention mechanisms. In 2019, the 2030 Agreement had been established to ensure that the Government’s efforts to eradicate violence would reach every part of the country. In accordance with the Agreement, the executive branch, the judiciary and decentralized local authorities were required to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women and ensure that redress was provided to victims. To that end, agreements on strengthening local mechanisms for the protection of women’s rights had been signed with over 160 local, provincial and municipal authorities.

8. Services for women victims of violence had been supplemented by the establishment of five new shelters that were funded partly by the Government and partly by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In addition, comprehensive care centres provided support to victims of violence and their children and specialized protection services provided social care and counselling to victims and coordinated the referral of cases within the comprehensive protection system, which included the police force, hospitals, health centres and the education system. Steps were currently being taken to establish the National Observatory on Violence against Women and ensure that it would comply with all the national and international obligations assumed by Ecuador. The Observatory would play a key role in ensuring that data on violence against women and children were disseminated to the public. The establishment of the single registry on acts of violence, which was currently at the development stage, would provide the police, health services and schools with greater access to data on violence against women and children. Such data would enable the establishment of an early warning system that would alert the relevant authorities when a woman’s life was believed to be in danger. Women’s civil society organizations played a key role in gathering data on women who had been murdered by their partners.

9. Although the budget allocated to the Comprehensive National System for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women had been reduced, there had been no reduction in the efforts made to implement the Comprehensive Organic Act on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women. The results of the second national survey on family relations and gender-based violence against women were currently being processed and would be published in November 2019 as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign. The survey, which had been conducted by the Secretariat for Human Rights, had included questions on various types of violence, including violence in schools, the home, the workplace and during childbirth.

10. The Secretariat for Human Rights took measures to prevent violence against women and provide support to victims, including by ensuring that they received reparation and felt empowered to resume their life plans. The Secretariat used its ordinary budget to fund special protection services, shelters and comprehensive care centres. The Ministry of Finance had allocated funds to projects aimed at preventing teenage pregnancy, detecting and preventing violence in schools, preventing gender-based violence and strengthening services for victims. Funds from the general State budget had been allocated to the bodies that made up the Comprehensive National System for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women, which included health-care providers, judicial bodies and
institutions that provided support to women and children. Although much of that funding was spent on the provision of support and redress, plans were in place to increase funding for preventive measures. The model for the management of comprehensive care centres and shelters for women and children was being updated on the basis of good national and international practices.

11. According to data collected by the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, there were currently 135 children in Ecuador who had been orphaned as a result of femicide and 95 judgments had been issued in respect of the offences concerned. In view of the vulnerability of children orphaned by femicide, the treatment and care of such children were considered to be a public health priority. The Secretariat for Human Rights, through the special protection services, provided social and psychological support to victims of violence, including children orphaned by femicide.

12. Under article 83 of the Civil Code, persons under the age of 18 years were prohibited from marrying. The Ministry of Social Inclusion conducted awareness-raising campaigns aimed at preventing teenage pregnancy and sexual violence against children. In 2017, in three provinces in the country, the Secretariat for Human Rights had conducted an investigation into pregnancy among adolescent girls with disabilities and its link to gender-based violence. The results of that investigation had been published in 2018 within the framework of the National Crusade against Gender-based Violence in order to raise awareness of the risks faced by women and girls with disabilities.

13. The National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan 2017–2021 was aimed at improving the provision of sexual and reproductive health services through the public health network. Comprehensive, high-quality treatment, including for abortion-related complications, was provided to women in compliance with current legislation and in respect of human rights. A ministerial agreement concluded in 2019 had established technical guidelines for the implementation of family planning strategies and provided for assistance to be given to women in cases of stillbirths and pregnancy-related complications. Clinical practice guidelines on therapeutic abortions had also been issued with a view to reducing maternal mortality. A total of 1,133 renovated centres offered primary care for adolescents; in addition, private areas had been set up for women and adolescent girls in 84 hospitals. The issuance of a comprehensive care manual for cases of gender-based violence had prompted the capacity-building of health-care workers so that they could implement the guidelines in the manual.

14. The State party placed a priority on ensuring that pregnant girls were able to continue their studies. In that connection, it had overseen the development of intersectoral evidence-based policies that took into account factors that were linked to pregnancy in adolescent girls. In 2018, the Ministry of Public Health had launched a five-year project to prevent pregnancies among adolescent girls and ensure that adolescents had universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. The concept of responsible adolescent parenthood had also been promoted.

15. Although the deliberations of the National Assembly in August 2019 had not resulted in the decriminalization of abortion in the case of rape, it was worth noting that there had been more votes for its decriminalization than against it.

16. Clinical guidelines on therapeutic abortion had been updated in 2014 and guidelines on comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care for persons with disabilities had also been issued. Furthermore, the State party had 18 hospital-based centres that specialized in problems of sexual violence.

17. The overall participation rate of women in the labour market had gone from 53.7 per cent in 2017 to 53.4 in 2018. The Government was committed to building an equal society and eliminating gender wage gaps and had launched programmes, such as Misión Mujer, to that end. It had also signed a cooperation agreement on gender equality to promote equal employment conditions for men and women. Other initiatives, such as regulations on telecommuting and the provision of lactation rooms, had been undertaken to promote women’s inclusion in the workforce.
18. **Ms. Suárez** (Ecuador) said that Ecuador had received support from international organizations, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), in dealing with the inflows of migrants along its northern border. An early warning system was being used to monitor cases of violence. Vaccinations and psychological support for foreign nationals, primarily from Venezuela, were being provided in northern provinces along the border with Colombia. The Ministry of Health oversaw 28 health-care centres throughout the region; other services, including for children, older persons and persons with disabilities, were also being provided. The Government ran economic inclusion programmes in the northern region; these programmes, which included special allowances and pensions for older persons and persons with disabilities, benefitted over 107,000 persons. The Ombudsman’s Office provided legal support and assistance programmes for migrants and refugees, as well as for stateless persons.

19. With regard to the case of *Trujillo Calero v. Ecuador*, the State had taken steps to ensure that the Ecuadorian Social Security Institute would cover the social security of Ms. Trujillo Calero and was working to determine the actual loss that would be part of her compensation.

20. The labour and human rights violations involving the Furukawa firm were being addressed by the Government through administrative and criminal legal proceedings. The firm had been forced to suspend its operations and an investigation into the alleged violations was being conducted by the Attorney General’s Office in order to identify those criminally responsible. The firm had already been fined for its violations of the Labour Code and the Code on Children and Adolescents. Inspections had been carried out at various company locations in different provinces. A registry of all the persons with connections to the camps, including foreign nationals who had worked for Furukawa and who were still living in Ecuador, had been established. On the basis of surveys, environmental inspections and interviews with the inhabitants of the Furukawa camps, health and education needs had been identified and services had been offered accordingly. In response to requests submitted by former employees, steps had been taken to ensure that all those affected would receive compensation.

21. Since 2008, Ecuador had set aside US$ 227 million for environmental conservation purposes, including the ProAmazonia programme, which received support from the United Nations Development Programme. Through three water preservation funds, over 230,000 hectares had been protected between 2017 and 2019 to guarantee the water supply. Further conservation efforts included the preservation of tortoises in their natural environments; rainfall collection systems; and ecotourism projects.

22. Tax reform would not undermine economic and social rights. Companies that received more than $10 million per year would pay a contribution of $300,000 over three years towards health, education and social security. In line with the climate change agenda, fossil fuel subsidies were no longer provided. Tariffs on the agricultural sector would be reduced or eliminated and taxes on vehicles would be reduced. The “Digital Ecuador” initiative was ongoing and tax breaks were available for information and communications technology, such as computers and cell phones, used for work, education and training.

23. **Mr. Uprimny** (Country Task Force) said that prison overcrowding was a significant problem and that prison conditions and drug-user treatment programmes were a cause for concern. The Committee would be grateful to learn whether the Government had considered non-custodial options for incarceration, especially for small-scale drug dealers, who accounted for a large number of inmates; how it would ensure conditions for a decent life for persons deprived of their liberty; whether it would develop a gendered approach as part of its drug policy; and what post-prison support mechanisms it provided for women.

24. Ecuador had a serious problem of land concentration, or the control of major swathes of land by a few dominant owners; this in turn had an impact on the right to food. The problem had been exacerbated by mining policy, which had further concentrated ownership, to the detriment of peasant farmers. It would be useful to know what strategies the Government had adopted to reverse those policies and guarantee access to land in order
to uphold the right to food. It would also be interesting to hear how it would ensure access to seeds, given the obstacles often presented by intellectual property laws.

25. With regard to the Trujillo Calero case, the Committee would welcome more detailed information on the measures taken by the State to implement its Views.

26. Ms. Lemus de Vásquez (Country Task Force) said that the Committee would appreciate responses to its questions regarding child labour; obesity; discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons; the availability of mental health services; and suicide prevention services.

27. Ms. Salazar Suquilanda (Ecuador) said that a robust legislative framework was now in place to ensure coordination of strategies to tackle sexual violence and domestic violence. As part of a national plan to promote harmonious coexistence and a culture of peace, the Ministry of Education and its partners had rolled out the “More United, Better Protected” campaign to all educational establishments with the aim of reducing physical, psychological and sexual violence in schools.

28. In 2018 and 2019, a series of protocols had been developed and disseminated to more than 1 million students, 100,000 teachers and education officials and 700,000 parents and legal guardians. A total of 610,000 copies of pocket-sized guides to the protocols had also been distributed. Almost 3,500 teachers had taken online courses on the prevention of violence in 2018, and a further 3,600 were expected to do so in 2019. Under the “Education is a Family Matter” programme, training on the prevention of sexual violence had been given in almost 3,000 educational establishments in 136 of the 140 school districts in Ecuador, reaching almost 3,000 guidance counsellors, more than 61,000 teachers and more than 1.46 million education professionals. All educational institutions had internal guidelines on maintaining peace and harmony, and a pathway had been developed to help school guidance counsellors respond to cases of at-risk children.

29. The Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion had conducted a media campaign under the slogan “Not one child less” to raise awareness of the cultural patterns that had perpetuated the belief that corporal punishment and verbal abuse were an acceptable part of parenting. The campaign had prompted concerned citizens to organize a number of events in public squares; those events had received positive coverage in the media and increased awareness of the right of children to live violence-free lives. In 2018 and 2019, a series of campaigns aimed at eradicating gender-based violence had been organized under the slogan “Leave your mark”. As part of a strategy to provide training to families on the protection and defence of rights, almost 290,000 participants had attended more than 8,000 workshops in 2018 on a range of topics including violence prevention and family empowerment. Between January and July 2019, a further 266,000 participants had attended workshops on issues such as sexual and reproductive rights and the prevention of teenage pregnancies.

30. Ms. Suárez (Ecuador) said that the Comprehensive Organic Criminal Code had been reformed so that persons found in possession of small amounts of more than one type of drug no longer received cumulative sentences for each drug. The total quantity of illicit substances would now be the basis for determining whether a person was a drug user or a small-scale dealer, in accordance with the thresholds defined by the National Council on Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances. Some categories of small-scale dealing were now eligible to be considered for alternative sentencing arrangements such as suspended sentences and community service. A public health programme was in place to treat drug addiction through both residential and community-based treatment courses.

31. To address prison overcrowding, the Government had focused its efforts on three primary areas, namely fundamental legal safeguards, the prison privileges and credits system and access to treatment and social rehabilitation programmes. Special judges were responsible for ensuring that prisoners’ rights were respected and that their privileges and credits were processed in a timely manner. The President had committed to continuing to grant presidential pardons on humanitarian grounds and for certain minor offences that did not have a major impact on society. The legislation in place to prevent drug use was focused on risk reduction and incorporated a gender-sensitive approach in all drug-related public policies in the health and education sectors.
32. In follow-up to the Committee’s general recommendations in connection with the Trujillo Calero case, the Government had improved access to information about the social security system, including with regard to an individual’s contributions and entitlements. The system was predicated on the principle of solidarity, meaning that the contributions made by affiliates could be used to support persons who were unable to make contributions themselves. It was now possible to recommence contributions after a period of non-payment. Persons engaged in unpaid domestic work, the majority of whom were women, could now obtain social security coverage for themselves and any children under the age of 18 years and were permitted to make contributions that were means-tested against their household income. Health care was never denied on the basis of a lack of social security contributions.

33. Clinics offering conversion therapy for lesbian, gay and bisexual persons were banned in Ecuador. The executive and the judiciary had worked together to shape guidelines on how to deal with such clinics, including reporting procedures. The relevant authorities had drafted a range of instructions and guidance for health-care providers to tackle the structural causes of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and ensure that they were able to obtain access to health services. In facilities providing emergency health care, the form used to report suspected cases of gender-based violence or serious human rights violations contained specific guidelines pertaining to cases involving lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. All public servants had to attend compulsory training on equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and the prohibition of discrimination against them.

34. In connection with the right to have access to land and seeds, the guidelines for the agricultural sector covered procedures for regularizing land ownership and determining the rightful owners of specific parcels of land. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and all related sectors were engaged in a participatory process to develop regulations regarding access to seeds.

35. Mr. Uprimny said that it would be interesting to learn whether a new 10-year Education Plan would be implemented following the success of the first one. He wished to know what the Government was doing to ensure universal access to preschool education, particularly for disadvantaged population groups, and to address the continuing disparities in literacy rates and access to basic education in urban and rural areas, with particular regard to low-income groups and indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian and Montubio peoples. He would welcome clarification of the statistics on the percentage of persons with disabilities receiving inclusive education and details of the strategies in place to guarantee inclusive education for all persons with disabilities.

36. It was unclear whether holding a humanitarian visa was a prerequisite for foreign nationals wishing to obtain education and health-care services in the State party. If that was the case, he would appreciate clarification of why children with irregular migration status were denied access to such services. If that was not the case, he would welcome an explanation of why such children reportedly experienced great difficulties in obtaining access to education and health care.

37. It would be helpful to know how the State party intended to tackle economic segregation in the education system and ensure that all children received education of the same quality irrespective of their socioeconomic background. It would be useful to know whether the strategies to address bullying of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in schools had been or would be evaluated.

38. With regard to cultural rights, the Committee would be grateful for details of the specific measures being taken to prevent the loss of endangered indigenous languages and their associated cultural heritage. The Committee was concerned at reports that the intercultural education being provided by the State party was of low quality and suffered from a lack of funding. It would welcome information on the steps the State party was taking to improve quality and to ensure that all indigenous communities received education in their own languages and not only in Quechua. It was unclear what measures were being taken to reduce poverty among indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian persons, for whom poverty reduction rates lagged far behind those of the white and mestizo sectors of the population.
39. He would appreciate details of how the authorities ensured that indigenous lands, which formed the bedrock of cultural diversity, were adequately demarcated and protected, in particular from the risks posed by the expansion of extractive industries. He would welcome clarification of how Executive Decree No. 1247, which did not take account of the cultural sensitivities of the various indigenous communities, was applied in the context of prior consultations.

40. Lastly, he asked what steps the State party was taking to guarantee universal access to the Internet for all population groups.

41. Ms. Chacón Castillo (Ecuador) said that her country had 14 nationalities and 18 peoples spread across its four regions. Twelve of its languages, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), were recognized as being in danger, and two additional languages were already extinct. Consequently, the cultural and linguistic diversity of Ecuador was under threat. Her Government was seeking to address that situation as a priority and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage had begun mapping the areas of the country where each language was spoken, based on the 2010 consensus. The Government, working through the Secretariat for Human Rights and the Office of the Under-Secretary for Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities, saw its role as being to strengthen support for ancestral languages, primarily by involving young people in an exchange of knowledge with their elders. Such exchanges must be promoted and safeguarded by the indigenous peoples and nationalities themselves, who must see them as fundamental for the transmission of their language, customs, traditions and history. Indigenous languages were particularly vulnerable owing to their essentially oral status, with no written alphabet. The Government had also established a working group to develop lines of policy to safeguard indigenous languages, create a map of individuals who represented the living cultural heritage of each language, and identify the main strategies for policy implementation. That would facilitate the development of an action plan, in which the indigenous peoples and nationalities of Ecuador would themselves be protagonists.

42. The country had a high-quality public education system, from which she herself had benefited. Regarding the right to education in one’s mother tongue, whereas students in the past had often been forced to learn Spanish, efforts were now being made to recruit teachers who spoke the students’ own language, as a way to motivate them and to ensure that they were not required to learn or speak Spanish in order to receive an education. Two interculturalism programmes existed at the graduate and postgraduate levels. In one of those programmes, students – many of them from indigenous and Afrodescendent communities themselves – were working to develop policies for promoting and protecting indigenous languages. Finally, exchanges of knowledge between the indigenous and mestizo populations were being encouraged, with an emphasis on the mestizo population learning about those aspects of their own culture that had previously been hidden.

43. Ms. Salazar Suquilanda (Ecuador) said that a new 10-year Education Plan had been established for the period 2016-2025, with the participation of some 247,000 members of society, including from academia, civil society and public educational institutions. The goal was to transform schools into learning communities that would strengthen the identity of the students, develop their capacities and reinforce their commitment to society. In particular, the Government sought to guarantee access to initial education and ensure that all students completed their secondary education (bachillerato) at the appropriate age, strengthen the provision of intercultural and bilingual education for indigenous peoples and nationalities at all levels, and ensure appropriate education for those with special educational needs, whether related to disability or not. It also aimed to make the community jointly responsible for the design, implementation and monitoring of education policy and to use public education resources efficiently.

44. In contrast to past decades, the Government was now promoting the idea of inclusivity in terms not only of disability but also of all other aspects of diversity, including ethnicity, age, human mobility, gender and poverty. Schools were seeking to adapt to the needs of young people, rather than expecting young people to adapt to school. In addition, the Ecuadorian education system was based on the premise that the whole of society was involved in promoting educational inclusion. Teachers did not have sole responsibility for
ensuring that children remained in school; rather, every individual had an important role to play.

45. The Government was aware of the gap in access to education for indigenous communities in areas where the population was highly dispersed. The Office of the Under-Secretary for Specialized and Inclusive Education had five departments to address the specific needs of different groups. Moreover, in recent years the Government had placed a major emphasis on developing a policy of inclusion for young people and adults who, for various reasons, had been unable to complete their education. As part of its commitment to remedying the historical lack of access to education and to ensuring universal access to initial basic education, the Ministry of Education had developed a range of special educational initiatives to be delivered both within and outside the school setting. Such initiatives included a programme to help children and young people aged 8 to 18 years to catch up academically and return to the normal education system, and a system of home visits for families with young children to ensure the children’s full development and raise awareness of the importance of completing school.

46. Student counsellors and psychologists worked to ensure the early detection of educational needs and disabilities, with a view to giving appropriate and individualized attention in a timely manner. The overall aim was to foster inclusion, rather than segregation, for students with disabilities. Specialized schools existed both for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities and for students with hearing impairments. The approaches followed at such schools also served as a reference for the inclusion of children with disabilities in ordinary schools. A total of 140 district units had been established to promote greater inclusion of children with disabilities, as well as young people in other vulnerable situations, including young offenders, pregnant adolescents and those engaging in problematic substance use. The number of students with disabilities within the education system had increased as a result of efforts to reduce stigma and raise awareness of the State’s obligations to give such students access to affirmative measures and targeted strategies for their welfare.

47. The Government had developed a specific policy to ensure that children in situations of human mobility, especially those that were undocumented at the time of their arrival in Ecuador, could access education while their migration status was being regularized. It was preparing a specific framework to determine their placement at an appropriate level of education, while making their security and welfare a priority. An education system that was open to all was vital for such students, as school could serve as one of their few sanctuaries at a time of uncertainty.

48. Special programmes to address illiteracy had been strengthened in recent years, and almost 130,000 young people and adults had participated in the “All ABC” literacy programme in 2019. A welcoming educational atmosphere was provided for people who were also working, in order to encourage them not to drop out of education. In addition, a growing number of people had benefited over the years from the basic education project for young people and adults. While the programme would subsequently need to be evaluated in order to assess the extent to which the literacy gap had been reduced, demand had clearly increased for the alternative arrangements provided for adult learners, including intensive learning, online study and evening classes.

49. Improving the quality of education in Ecuador in order to obtain similar educational standards to those of neighbouring countries was a State priority. As part of its strategy for improvement, the Ministry of Education provided teachers with continuous training, not only in the usual subject areas but also in relation to inclusive education. Over 100,000 teachers had received training in that area.

50. Ms. Chacón Castillo (Ecuador) said that she was grateful to the members of the Committee for acknowledging her country’s positive efforts in the achievement of economic, cultural and social rights, and for making observations and recommendations that would support it in further strengthening those rights. The adjustment measures undertaken, including the end of fuel subsidies, would allow the State to recover millions of dollars that would be used to improve the living conditions of families in the first and second quintiles, increase access to the Human Development Bond cash transfer
programme, provide better health and education services, and promote inclusion. Such progress would not be easy and required the will of all Ecuadorians. Her Government was therefore seeking to strengthen solidarity in the country and, in particular, to address the current spate of violence. Although Ecuador was going through a tumultuous time, major benefits would follow. Among other measures, her Government intended to reduce or eliminate certain tariffs and taxes and introduce a number of changes to the labour market with a view to increasing employment opportunities.

51. Ecuador was one of only five countries that had signed all nine human rights instruments, a reflection of its commitment and dedication to the expansion of human rights. It was currently at a critical juncture, but the challenges it faced were part of its journey towards the full achievement of its democratic vocation.

52. Mr Mancisidor said that he wished to commend the delegation for the excellent technical quality of the information provided and for its political will to enter into an open and honest discussion. The Committee had been surprised by the declaration of a state of emergency in Ecuador, but noted the delegation’s assurances that the right of assembly had been suspended only in the earliest hours of the emergency and in the most seriously affected areas where public security was threatened, and that the Government had complied fully with international law and human rights.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.