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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 October 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Eyerhalde Geymonat (Vice-Chair) Uruguay)
later: Ms. Farngalo (Vice-Chair) (Liberia)
later: Ms. Eyerhalde Geymonat (Vice-Chair) (Uruguay)

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In the absence of Mr. Braun (Luxembourg), Ms. Eyerhalde Geymonat (Uruguay), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 66: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/74/136, A/74/162, A/74/231, A/74/246, A/74/249 and A/74/259)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/74/240)

1. **Mr. Baror** (Israel) said that his country was proud to support the efforts of many countries around the world to implement programmes to make education more accessible to, and inclusive of, all members and sectors of society through its Agency for International Development Cooperation. Technology had become a core aspect of almost every industry. An understanding of technology was therefore crucial to be a valuable part of the workforce, which first required an understanding of mathematics and science. The Government had accordingly implemented a programme to improve education in mathematics and science. Educators and school staff around the world had been trained by Israeli experts to implement the programme in their own countries. Israel had increased the number of pupils studying high-level mathematics and science in high schools. Over the past few years, Israeli pupils had won dozens of medals in international mathematics and science competitions and had performed exceptionally well in robotics, innovation and other technology-related competitions.

2. Investing in the education of the future not only gave children the tools needed for the twenty-first century but also served as a catalyst for equality and social mobility. As part of its programme, the Government had invested extensively in encouraging students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to study mathematics and science at higher levels. The Government also invested in encouraging young women, who were often underrepresented in those fields, to take their rightful place therein. As a result, the number of Israeli women competing in and winning international competitions was on the rise.

3. **Mr. Sparber** (Liechtenstein) said that, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States had agreed to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. To that end, Liechtenstein, together with Australia and the Netherlands, had launched a blueprint for mobilizing finance against slavery and trafficking, which served as

a toolkit for sustainable and innovative financing, responsible lending and investment, and compliance and regulation. Member States should ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Universal ratification thereof was essential to protecting children from being trafficked and trapped in modern slavery.

4. It was devastating that children continued to be used as human shields and sex slaves. Sexual violence against boys was significantly underreported, owing to stigma, cultural taboos and a lack of services, as documented by the All Survivors Project. The monitoring mechanism established by the Security Council in its resolution 1612 (2005) to document grave violations against children in conflict situations was an important tool for the protection of children's rights. Another important tool was the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, which allowed children, groups of children or their representatives to submit complaints for violations of their rights to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, thereby enabling children to seek justice when their national legal systems failed to provide a remedy. Liechtenstein was among the few States to have ratified the Optional Protocol and called upon all States that had not yet done so to ratify it and the other Optional Protocols.

5. **Ms. Mohamed Didi** (Maldives) said that children in her country were entitled to special protection and assistance under the Constitution to guarantee their safety and protect them from harm, exploitation and discrimination. In 1991, the Government had adopted a law on the protection of the rights of the child and had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It had ratified all three Optional Protocols thereto, including, in September 2019, the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. To increase consistency between the 1991 law and international child protection laws and standards, the Government had submitted a child rights protection bill to Parliament in August 2019. Under the bill, a new council would be created to serve as the primary means of protecting children in need and advise government ministries on the creation of laws and policies related to the rights of the child.

6. The Government placed high priority on the personal and intellectual development of children through ensuring good-quality early childhood education. Owing to the geographical dispersion of the islands and the lack of economies of scale, Maldives faced significant challenges in providing adequate educational facilities, and some students had to travel to

other islands for higher, secondary and tertiary education. Given the lack of resources, infrastructure, trained staff and relevant expertise, as well as budgetary constraints, the Government experienced challenges in meeting the needs of children with special needs and was therefore working to strengthen the institutional structure for disability-related policymaking and implementation. Establishing a minimum social protection floor, strengthening the legal and regulatory framework for the efficient provision of social protection services and conducting a national sensitization programme on social protection issues were among the policy priorities of the Government.

7. In January 2019, with a view to fostering positive change in the growth and learning abilities of pupils, the Government had launched a healthy breakfast programme in State schools across the country. The new national curriculum placed greater emphasis on critical thinking skills, which pupils needed to achieve better learning outcomes and attain their desired goals in life. Diverse pedagogical methods were used in classrooms to make learning intellectually stimulating and interesting. Government policies were aimed at enhancing the opportunities for young people to develop the skills necessary to become economically productive, socially active and engaged citizens in the future. Significant improvements had also been achieved in the health sector, resulting in a substantial reduction in child mortality.

8. **Ms. Wagner** (Switzerland) said that, since the adoption in 1990 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, globally, deaths of children under 5 years of age had been reduced by more than 50 per cent and the proportion of undernourished children had been reduced by almost half according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Nevertheless, 262 million children and young people worldwide remained out of school. To foster equity and inclusion in education, special attention needed to be given to children excluded on the basis of gender, children with disabilities, children from minority communities and poor families, and children affected by armed conflicts and emergency situations. Greater efforts needed to be invested in improving the quality of education to equip children with the skills needed for their future.

9. Providing education opportunities in regions affected by armed conflict, protracted crises and other emergencies remained a significant challenge. As a member of the steering group of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, Switzerland was endeavouring to promote access to education in emergency situations and address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children in those situations in a

holistic manner. Switzerland called on all parties to armed conflict to respect international law. Children deprived of liberty were also particularly vulnerable and at greater risk of violations of their rights. All States must step up their efforts to ensure that the rights of every child were respected.

10. A massive global movement of children and young people was currently combating climate change by protesting and demanding concrete measures. Switzerland welcomed the participation and inclusion of children in discussions on issues affecting them at the United Nations and at the national and local levels. Switzerland looked forward to supporting the organization of an international conference in Geneva to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. Children would be invited to actively participate in the discussions and be involved in the responses.

11. Switzerland had ratified the third Optional Protocol to the Convention, on a communications procedure, in 2017 and encouraged all States to do so and to cooperate fully with the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

12. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that the situation of children continued to be adversely affected by the prevailing security, humanitarian and economic challenges. The international community must demonstrate the political will and take concerted action to address the situation of children in armed conflicts, who were disproportionately affected by violations such as mass abductions, torture and sexual violence. The plight of children at the hands of terrorist organizations should also continue to be the focus of international community. In Turkey, the families of children who had been abducted by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) had begun a silent protest.

13. The Government had been endeavouring to strengthen the rights of children and improve their living conditions by improving the legal and institutional framework. Children had been included among the groups provided with special protection under the 2010 amendments to the Constitution. Turkey was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and all the Optional Protocols thereto. It had also ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the Council of Europe Convention on Contact concerning Children. Turkey attached importance to the rights of the girl child, and ensuring education opportunities for all children and closing the gender gap in all spheres of life were central priorities. In that context, Turkey was pleased to again be hosting,

together with Canada and Peru, the annual event to mark the International Day of the Girl Child at United Nations Headquarters.

14. The number of child refugees under the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had more than doubled in just 10 years. Governments bore the primary responsibility to address their needs, and the international community must redouble its efforts to address the needs of displaced children. As the largest refugee-hosting country in the world, Turkey had shared its experience with regard to children who had sought refuge in the country. The international community must act in conformity with the principle of responsibility and burden-sharing on that issue.

15. **Monsignor Hansen** (Observer for the Holy See) said that his delegation welcomed the focus placed on children without parental care in the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/74/231). Such a theme could not be timelier given the severe negative consequences that continued to be suffered by children and societies following the breakdown of the family and, consequently, parental care. Every effort should be made to ensure that children grew up in a family environment in which they experienced love, protection and security.

16. The Convention recognized the prior rights of parents to choose the kind of education that should be given their children. His delegation remained deeply concerned about “comprehensive sexuality education” programmes that were not respectful of the rights of parents. Such programmes often promoted agendas that did not correspond to the educational and broader needs of the child. The education of children, including teaching about authentic human love, human sexuality, married love and related matters, was primarily and fundamentally the right, duty and responsibility of parents.

17. **Ms. Adhikari** (Nepal) said that, as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, her country had incorporated the core principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child into its laws, plans and policies. The Constitution of 2015 guaranteed fundamental rights for every child. The Act relating to Children of 2018 was guided by a rights-based approach and had been drafted in line with the Convention.

18. The Government was committed to investing in children’s health and education and protecting them from violence and discrimination. The national

immunization programme, which had been providing equitable services to remote regions and marginalized communities for more than four decades, had benefited pregnant women and reduced child mortality, morbidity and disability associated with vaccine preventable diseases. Nutrition interventions, such as providing vitamin A, iron and calcium supplements and deworming children under 5 years of age, had proved effective in addressing communicable and preventable diseases and malnutrition among children.

19. The Government was also committed to ensuring free, equitable and high-quality primary and secondary education for every child, including children with disabilities. Investments made by the Government in early childhood education and development had resulted in an increase in the number of children aged between 3 and 4 years in pre-primary education. To keep children from indigenous communities in schools, the Government had encouraged mother tongue instruction. The Government had also endorsed a national strategy to end child marriage in line with relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

20. **Mr. Zulu** (Zambia) said that his Government had taken steps to strengthen legislation to ensure that all forms of violence, including sexual abuse, against children were treated as serious offences and punished with a minimum of 15 years’ imprisonment and a maximum of life imprisonment. The Ministry of Justice, in close collaboration with key stakeholders, had continued to review various pieces of legislation to harmonize all legal provisions dealing with the promotion and protection of children. Consequently, the Government was developing a children’s code bill that would ensure that the various international instruments and treaties on children’s rights to which Zambia was a party were incorporated into national law. The Government had also revised the national child policy to make it more responsive to the needs of children and to address emerging and persistent cultural, social and economic challenges affecting the well-being of children, such as sexual abuse and child marriage.

21. Zambia had made significant strides over the 30 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The under-5 mortality rate had gone down, owing largely to increased immunization coverage and improved access to health care. An estimated 34 per cent of children living with HIV under 14 years of age were receiving antiretroviral therapy, and the Government was establishing virological laboratories that would enable HIV testing of infants under 18 months of age. With support from cooperating partners, the Government was implementing

a programme for vulnerable children and adolescents and their families that would contribute to integral human development by improving the child and family welfare systems and outcomes for children in vulnerable situations. The rate of enrolment in primary and secondary education had increased considerably, and parity had been achieved in primary education. Parliament had approved a motion to provide sanitary towels to all girls in public schools in order to increase school attendance by girls, especially those living in rural areas.

22. **Ms. Obama Mbengono** (Equatorial Guinea) said that her country had taken steps to promote the well-being of children in line with its national economic and social development plan up to 2035, which was aligned with Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2030 Agenda. To ensure universal high-quality primary education, schools were available in the majority of communities and villages, no matter how remote. The Ministry of Education and Science had created a general directorate to identify boys and girls with special educational needs in schools and support the design of programmes to meet their needs. The Committee for the Support of the Child in Equatorial Guinea had adopted measures to ensure support for persons with disabilities of all ages and the construction of school centres and canteens for children without sufficient social protection.

23. The health system of Equatorial Guinea had served to significantly reduce the under-5 mortality rate. With the support of development partners such as UNICEF, Equatorial Guinea was conducting national immunization campaigns and implementing programmes to combat malaria, acute respiratory infections and HIV/AIDS in order to protect the health of children.

24. Equatorial Guinea had adopted laws and provisions to protect children in times of peace and conflict. It had recently endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and called upon States that had not yet done so to endorse it. Her delegation supported the work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and urged States to do so in the Security Council and the Third Committee.

25. **Mr. Driuchin** (Russian Federation) said that it was a great shame that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had still not been universally ratified because one State, namely, the United States of America, was not a party thereto. His delegation called upon the United States to move beyond merely paying lip service to support for the protection of the rights of the child.

26. The need for children to grow up in a family environment for the full and harmonious development of their personalities and for their best interests was recognized in the Convention. The clear calls to separate the interests of children and parents were therefore of great concern. Such calls were adversarial to the natural relationships between parents and children and undermined traditional family and cultural values. The Russian Federation would continue to defend the preeminent right of parents with respect to the raising of their child and the presumption of the parents' good faith when implementing parental rights, while safeguarding the inviolability of family life and the rights of the family from arbitrary interference.

27. The decade of childhood, declared by the President of the Russian Federation from January 2018, served as further proof that childcare was a consistent strategic policy. As part of the decade, special attention was being paid to increasing the well-being of families and children, improving medical assistance for children and the quality of education, ensuring information security and developing systems for protecting and ensuring the rights and interests of children, including equal opportunities for those requiring special State support.

28. The Russian Federation had been among the first countries to ratify the Convention and was committed to upholding its international legal obligations relating to the protection of the rights of the child. In July 2019, the Russian Federation had submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child its sixth and seventh combined periodic report on its implementation of the Convention, including the Optional Protocols thereto on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

29. **Ms. Nguyen Lien Huong** (Viet Nam) said that, in the context of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it was important to reaffirm the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the survival and development of the child and the views of the child. In full adherence to those principles, Viet Nam had continuously improved its legal and policy frameworks to better ensure the rights of the child. Steps had been taken to translate the revised Act on Children of 2016 into practice, such as the issuance of a government decree on a safe, healthy and friendly school environment and the prevention of school violence, and the implementation of a programme for the prevention and reduction of child labour and a plan on family and community-based early childhood development.

30. As a country that had undergone decades-long wars, Viet Nam was fully aware of the importance of pursuing education for children during wartime. In that context, Viet Nam had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. Since 2009, child forums had been organized biannually at the national level and annually at the provincial and district levels to provide an avenue for children to voice their ideas and aspirations. The sixth national child forum had been convened in August 2019 with the participation of nearly 200 children, resulting in 22 recommendations on issues such as violence and abuse, and child safety in cyberspace.

31. **Ms. Niculae** (Romania) said that her country had taken significant steps to support the empowerment and involvement of children and young people in decision-making on issues concerning them. During the Romanian presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Bucharest European Union Children's Declaration had been finalized at the international conference on child participation in decision-making and policy development at the European Union level, which had been held in the nation's capital city in May 2019. The Declaration stated that child participation should be supported through dedicated school programmes, capacity-building programmes for parents and guardians and local programmes for the inclusion of children in community consultation mechanisms. All relevant national consultation and decision-making processes should have spaces and mechanisms for child participation, and parliaments should consider establishing child consultation mechanisms when drafting legislation affecting children.

32. Her delegation was paying special attention to the resolution on the rights of the child to be adopted by the Third Committee during the current session, given its focus on children without parental care. As a country that had had to overcome the institutionalization of children deprived of parental care, Romania was fully aware that the best place for a child to be raised was in a family or in an environment as close as possible to a family. The Government was endeavouring to close traditional residential institutions for children by the end of 2020. Placement in families or foster care would be among the first solutions taken into consideration, while placement in a family-type home would be the last alternative. Under Romanian law on children's rights, the institutionalization of children under 7 years of age was strictly forbidden, with the exception of those with disabilities who were dependent on specialized medical care. A bill currently under debate in Parliament would also forbid the placement of children under 3 years of age who were dependent on specialized medical care into residential institutions.

33. **Mr. Tun Lin Swai** (Myanmar) said that his Government had placed the all-round development of children at the core of its national development strategic plan, which also supported the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Since becoming a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government had ratified the International Labour Organization Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), in 2013, and the Optional Protocol thereto on the involvement of children in armed conflict, during the high-level week of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, to reinforce its ongoing efforts to protect and promote children's rights consistent with its international commitments.

34. The revised Child Act had been adopted by Parliament on July 2019 to align national policies and regulatory frameworks with the Convention. Under the newly enacted Act, children born in Myanmar were guaranteed the fundamental and unconditional right to be registered at birth. A new chapter on children and armed conflict criminalized the six grave violations against children in armed conflict and provided children with stronger legal protection in the context of armed conflict. The introduction of diversion and alternative mechanisms for children in conflict with the law demonstrated a significant departure from a punitive-focused juvenile justice system to a more child-centred and rehabilitation-oriented one.

35. Since the signing of the joint action plan with the United Nations in 2012, almost 1,000 former child soldiers had been released and reintegrated into the community. To accelerate the implementation of the plan and increase awareness of the prevention of grave violations, the Government had conducted training workshops in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and a nationwide public awareness campaign to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children had been launched in 2013. Sustainable peace was the only viable way to alleviate the plight of children in armed conflicts. The Government had therefore placed peace and national reconciliation as the highest priorities in the national agenda. It had also reconvened the Union Peace Conference to strive for lasting peace and a democratic federal union.

36. **Mr. Akhigbe** (Nigeria) said that, as a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, his country was making every effort to ensure that children who had been unlawfully recruited or used by armed groups were not victimized again by the law. Children in armed conflicts were treated as victims rather than as being in conflict with Nigerian law. As

part of its overall security sector reform, the Government had facilitated the adoption and implementation of a protocol for the handover of children associated with armed conflict. Given the high number of unaccompanied, separated and orphaned children, the Government had also promoted the rehabilitation, reintegration and family reunification of children affected by armed conflicts.

37. The Government was determined to keep children in schools by protecting education from attack and providing a safe and conducive environment for learning. In addition to an initiative to promote safe schools, Nigeria had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and its rejection of all forms of military occupation of schools. The Federal Ministry of Education had developed a curriculum for education in emergencies to ensure that children studying in emergency situations could be mainstreamed into the formal school system once the situation had normalized.

38. In follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children, Nigeria had endorsed the revised Economic Community of West African States child policy and its strategic action plan for the protection of the rights of the child and the ending of child marriage. To strengthen its national planning, coordination and resource allocation for children, and with a view to integrating the international goals of the outcome document of the special session, entitled “A world fit for children”, into government policies, Nigeria had launched two reports in March 2019, which had already been used to enhance public financing for child protection. His delegation called on the United Nations to legally define abuse and sexual exploitation of children, both online and offline.

39. **Mr. Sisouk** (Lao People’s Democratic Republic) said that his delegation welcomed the high-level event of the General Assembly held in New York on 25 September 2019 to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. His Government, together with relevant non-governmental and civil society organizations, had also celebrated by holding a consultative meeting on the promotion and protection of the rights of children in Vientiane on 26 September 2019.

40. The Government had pursued a consistent policy of promoting the development of children and protecting their rights. The rights of children were stipulated in the Constitution and relevant legislation. The Government was also accelerating the implementation of the national plan on combating and eradicating all forms of violence against women and children for the period 2014–2020. To protect children

from trafficking, a national committee had been established to combat trafficking in persons, including by developing a national database on trafficking in persons and setting up 1,300 hotlines to enable reporting.

41. At the regional level, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic was participating in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. At the international level, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic was implementing its obligations under the Convention, to which it was a State party. The Government was currently preparing the report for its third universal periodic review at the Human Rights Council, in early 2020.

42. **Ms. Ndaw Dieng** (Senegal) said that her country welcomed the reduction in the mortality rate among children under 5 years of age, in particular in low-income countries, and the progress made towards gender parity in the rates of access to and completion of primary school. Nevertheless, new strategic approaches were needed to achieve goals such as promoting healthy ways of living and providing high-quality education, and significant challenges still needed to be overcome, especially for girls, most notably child mortality, HIV/AIDS, malaria, child marriage and violence against children.

43. Under the Emerging Senegal Plan, children were among the priority beneficiaries of the national social protection policy. The national strategy for the protection of children had revolutionized the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The pillars of the strategy were the prevention of all forms of ill-treatment, exploitation and violence, the effective handling of cases to facilitate synergies and social cooperation, and the promotion of all rights through the creation and consolidation of links with other systems. A national intersectoral committee for the protection of children had been established to steer the strategy.

44. The national family security grants programme, the universal health coverage programme and the programme for the promotion of equal opportunity cards for persons with disabilities had been implemented in the light of the need to improve the situation of children. The forthcoming adoption of a children’s code would help to address the challenges related to the strict enforcement of laws related to the rights of the child, while the establishment of a “Defender of Children” and the revival of the national children’s parliament would make the national institutional mechanism complete.

45. **Ms. Abbey** (Ghana) said that, over the years, successive Governments had adopted national legislation and policies with the objective of translating relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into action. Policies had also been instituted to make high-quality basic education free and accessible for all Ghanaian children. In the past two years, the Government had successfully implemented a policy to guarantee free secondary education for all children, regardless of the economic circumstances of their parents, resulting in a significant increase in female enrolment and helping to address the gender disparity that had existed previously.

46. The urgent task of addressing violence against children required concerted global action and renewed commitment at the national and local levels. The Ghanaians against Child Abuse movement, which had underscored need to prevent abuse and promote the well-being of children in Ghana, was expected to lead to a reduction in violence and harmful practices against children and adolescents.

47. As part of its efforts to provide high-quality and inclusive education for all, the Government was striving to ensure that schools were safe and supportive. The Ghana Education Service had taken steps to address violence in schools and provide a safe learning environment for children, including the continuous enforcement of the ban on corporal punishment in private and public schools and the issuance of a directive for teachers to consider alternative forms of punishment that would not impede the academic performance of pupils. Children required an enabling environment to develop and thrive, and it was the duty of the State to make certain services and facilities child friendly, including in the areas of health and justice. The Judicial Service of Ghana, with support from UNICEF, had inaugurated the first child-friendly court in Ghana in 2018.

48. **Ms. Shikongo** (Namibia) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the first Convention ratified by her country upon achieving independence in 1990. Given that the Convention had been incorporated, almost to the letter, into national laws, Namibia had some of the most progressive legislation on the rights of the child in the world. Under the updated Childcare and Protection Act of 2015, the rights of children had been expanded by bringing the Constitution into line with international agreements to which Namibia was a party. The Act set out the responsibilities of the Government, parents, guardians and others in ensuring the access of all children to free, equal and equitable education. The Government continued to prioritize that goal, and the ministries related to education received some of the

largest allocations from the national budget. Consequently, primary and secondary school enrolment was at an all-time high, in particular among girls. Namibia was therefore on track to achieve targets 4.1, 4.2 and 4.5 to 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Although it still lagged behind on target 4.4, Namibia was doing its utmost to enhance the skill sets of young people, including by increasing the provision of technical and vocational training.

49. Given the high burden of HIV/AIDS in Namibia, children and young people must be equipped with all the information necessary to make informed decisions. The newly introduced curriculum on life skills, including updated sexual and reproductive health education, would contribute to reducing the unacceptably high rates of teenage pregnancy and the number of HIV infections among young girls. To respond effectively to online child exploitation and abuse, all sectors must commit themselves to combating that emerging form of violence against children. The Government, with the support of UNICEF, had established a dedicated national task force with a national framework and road map for child online protection.

50. The Children's Parliament, the fifth session of which had opened in August 2019, provided Namibian children with the opportunity to share ideas and gain a deeper understanding of the tools at their disposal to engage with leaders and decision makers. Children and adolescents in Namibia were therefore taking direct action on issues affecting them.

51. **Mr. Penaranda** (Philippines) said that, under the Constitution, the State defended the rights of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, and to special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty and exploitation. The State recognized the family as the foundation of the nation and ensured not only the survival of children but also their overall well-being.

52. The Philippines would commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child with a month-long celebration in November 2019, including an international conference in Manila that would showcase the role of teenagers in addressing violence against children and a social media campaign launched by the Department of Education to create awareness of children's rights. The right of children to free and compulsory elementary education had been extended by the President to tertiary education in public colleges and universities.

53. The siege of Marawi by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) elements in 2017 had regrettably hurt many children, some of whom had been forced to join armed groups. After five months of fighting, government

forces had recaptured Marawi, and children had been reunited with their families. In January 2019, Congress had passed the Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act.

54. As a true democracy, the Philippines valued participation and inclusion. The youth assemblies established in all villages gave children as young as 15 years of age the right to vote and represent themselves in the Youth Council. In schools, every class elected a set of officers to represent the pupils in matters affecting them.

55. Poverty and malnutrition continued to negatively affect children. In November 2018, the President had signed a law requiring all relevant government agencies to scale up nutrition intervention programmes for infants and children up to the age of 2 years. The law also provided special care for adolescent females and pregnant and lactating women. Children of migrants continued to face discrimination and be at risk of statelessness. The Philippines was pleased that the promotion of the rights of the child and the upholding of the principle of the best interests of the child were among the guiding principles of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

56. **Ms. Delvera** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, despite the many achievements made since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, States had faced new challenges related to urbanization, new technologies, climate change, human mobility and demographic transition. The physical, emotional, psychological and economic cost of corporal punishment, sexual violence, bullying and cyberbullying to child victims, their families and society as a whole was immense.

57. As the most unequal region in the world, Latin America and the Caribbean was faced with a marked infantilization of poverty, which was further aggravated by multiple intersectionalities based on gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and migratory status. In that context, it was essential to strengthen social protection systems. In 2014, Mexico had adopted legislation on the rights of children, which had led to the establishment of a federal office for the protection of children and adolescents. In July 2019, the country had approved a plan of action for 2019–2024 in the framework of the Global Alliance to End Violence against Children, in which it had participated as a pathfinding country since 2016. In addition, it had adopted a comprehensive national policy on early childhood care and development, aimed at addressing inequalities and existing gaps through the implementation of a comprehensive care road map, multidimensional

care policies and the establishment of indicators and targets for compliance.

58. **Ms. Tripathi** (India) said that children remained the most vulnerable group in a world driven by poverty, armed conflict, terrorism and humanitarian crises. Exposure to the digital environment was reshaping childhood by creating both opportunities and risks, impacting cognition, behaviour and the physical and mental health of children. It was therefore necessary to strengthen digital literacy to ensure that children enjoyed the benefits of digital technologies without compromising their well-being. Climate change was a challenge that called for urgent collective action to reduce children's vulnerability, and the Third Committee offered an inclusive forum to discuss such emerging and existing challenges. However, one delegation had chosen to distract the attention of the Committee with deceitful political propaganda by making unwarranted references to internal matters of India. It was a country that ran a system of schooling young children in violent extremist ideologies and recruiting them in terrorist groups. She hoped that the international community would not be beguiled by the baseless allegations of that delegation.

59. The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights in India was a statutory body that ensured that laws, policies, programmes and administrative mechanisms were in consonance with child rights perspectives enshrined in the Constitution of India and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Free elementary education was a fundamental right in India, and private schools reserved 25 per cent of seats for children from low-income sectors. The national policy for children, grounded in a rights-based approach, focused on survival, health and nutrition; education and development; protection; and participation. The country's integrated child development service was aimed at addressing the nutrition, health-care and pre-school education needs of more than 100 million children below 6 years of age, as well as of adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating mothers. The Clean India Mission, aimed at improving school attendance, provided water, sanitation and hygiene facilities to schools, and a programme had been introduced to address the imbalance in the child sex ratio. Government agencies and civil society worked together to implement relevant legal provisions to safeguard the rights of children and juveniles alleged to be in conflict with the law, as well as those in need of care and protection. Measures were also in place to prevent and protect children against cyberstalking and cyberbullying, sexual harassment, pornography and trafficking in persons.

60. **Mr. Bentley** (United States of America) said that girls in rural areas were among the most vulnerable. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was working to reduce malnutrition in women of reproductive age and children under 5 years of age through the Government's Feed the Future programme and Global Health Initiative, the Office of Food for Peace development programmes, resilience efforts and other nutrition investments. Adequate nutrition for women before, during and after pregnancy was integral to ending preventable child and maternal deaths. In response to concerns related to a lack of access to safe sanitation facilities and insufficient water supplies, USAID had made substantial investments worldwide in humanitarian water, sanitation and hygiene programmes focused on meeting immediate hygiene needs and rehabilitating sanitation infrastructures. Through its Water and Development Strategy, USAID aimed to give at least 8 million people access to sanitation by 2022, including by helping Governments and the private sector to raise and manage their own national resources for water, sanitation and hygiene.

61. USAID invested in pre-primary to higher education in more than 50 developing countries with the aim of giving girls and young women literacy and life skills. To address violence and harassment against girls in schools, it supported the development and implementation of a non-discrimination and anti-sexual harassment policy for higher education institutions in Afghanistan. The Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally committed resources to preventing and raising awareness of child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation and cutting. USAID, through the DREAMS partnership, also worked with community, faith-based and non-governmental organizations to mobilize volunteers to better address risk factors for HIV in girls. The Child Protection Compact Partnerships was aimed at addressing the forced labour of children; strengthening efforts to prosecute and convict child traffickers; providing trauma-informed care for child victims of those crimes; and preventing child trafficking.

62. **Ms. Sánchez García** (Colombia) said that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals was inextricably linked to respecting human rights, as set out in target 16.2 of the Goals, which called for an end to violence against children. Her Government aimed to integrate that objective into its recently launched national development plan, which was focused on combating violence against children and adolescents and addressing the needs of children facing specific challenges, including those living in rural areas, belonging to ethnic groups and living with disabilities.

The National Policy for Children and Adolescents 2018–2030 also sought to generate well-being, give access to opportunities and encourage children and adolescents to participate in the transformation of the country.

63. Investing in children, particularly during their first six years, was highly beneficial for society. That vision was reflected in policy guidelines and in concrete actions, including making significant investments over a four-year period into comprehensive development policies for children from early childhood to adolescence and for vocational training and skills development.

64. **Ms. Babedi** (South Africa) said that, 30 years after the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, her country remained committed to ensuring the constitutional rights of children. While significant progress had been made on children's rights indicators, including survival, growth, development, protection and participation, the Government was working on a number of key areas. Access to free education for children from poor households had been expanded and over 9 million children attended no-fee schools. Support for early childhood education had increased significantly, and every South African child would be provided with digital workbooks and textbooks on a tablet device over the next six years. South Africa had made a pledge that, within the next decade, every 10-year-old would be able to read for meaning. In 2015, the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy had been adopted to provide skills and opportunities to young people, especially children with disabilities.

65. Violence was a daily reality for many children in South Africa. In that context, her Government had pledged \$475 million to improve the criminal justice system and provide better care for victims. In line with article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Constitutional Court of South Africa had recently upheld a high court ruling that corporal punishment of children was a violation of the Constitution. Committed to eliminating child, early and forced marriage by 2030, in line with target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, South Africa was developing a draft bill banning forced marriages and child marriages, which would provide even greater protection against those harmful practices.

66. **Ms. Bogyay** (Hungary) said that it was the cornerstone of her Government's policies to ensure that children grew up in a loving family environment. In 2018, the Government had reinforced training for adoptive parents; increased support for the adoption of older children and children with health conditions; and

expanded the system of temporary homes for families in crisis situations. A number of advances had also been made to prevent and end violence and discrimination against children.

67. The Criminal Code of Hungary had been updated in 2017 to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence against minors were banned from pursuing professions or activities that would place them in a position of authority or influence over children. In January 2019, the Government had introduced the Barnahus model of care for neglected and abused children, with a special focus on survivors of sexual abuse. The method ensured that investigations and hearings were appropriate to the age and level of development of the child, in order to reduce trauma and re-victimization during proceedings. Moreover, to fight the scourge of human trafficking and child prostitution, a government resolution had been adopted on the provision of care and reintegration opportunities for children who were victims of those crimes.

68. In recent years, the Government had reinforced guarantees preventing unlawful segregation of disadvantaged children, including Roma children, in an effort to eliminate discrimination and ensure social inclusion; introduced social assistance in nursery and primary schools; and launched a programme to provide free meals to children in need, including during school holidays.

69. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that, in order to strengthen the systems of protection of the rights of children and adolescents, his Government had adopted a national plan for family and community life; a national system to assist adolescents in conflict with the law; a policy for preventing and combating sexual abuse and exploitation; and a programme for the protection of children and adolescents under death threat. The Statute of the Child and Adolescent had been updated to include a national registry for missing persons; to raise the minimum age for children travelling without parents or legal guardians from 12 to 16 years; and to establish a national week in February each year for the prevention of teen pregnancy. Laws had also been passed to prohibit the marriage of children under the age of 16 and to prevent school absenteeism, while educational courses aimed at assisting street children and adolescents were under development. A national policy had been enacted to prevent self-harm and suicide among children and adolescents and to promote their mental health.

70. An initiative had been launched to bring together families, communities and public authorities to combat sexual violence against children and adolescents, and a new plan was being drafted for the prevention and

eradication of child labour and the protection of adolescent workers. The Government was redoubling efforts to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates and to provide support to the families of children born with microcephaly and other rare diseases.

71. **Ms. Calem-Sangiorgio** (Monaco) said that her country, in cooperation with the national authorities and civil society, provided social, medical, psychological and educational support to 130,000 children every year, including to orphans and children without family support, children living in traditional Quranic boarding schools (*talibé* children) and child victims of trafficking. The country's international cooperation agency assisted refugee children and children from discriminated minorities in the Middle East; provided support to minors in prison and in conflict with the law in West Africa; and supported a network of local associations working with vulnerable children in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the African Medical and Research Foundation and some 50 non-governmental organizations. One of the Principality's flagship programmes was aimed at supporting children marginalized for health reasons.

72. Monaco had adopted a bill that marked an important step forward by enshrining the right of adopted children to access to their origins. International Day of the Rights of the Child was celebrated in Monaco in November each year to raise awareness in schools of the situation of the world's children whose fundamental rights were not respected, and to raise funds for partner associations.

73. With early access to information technology, children were becoming increasingly aware of the threats they faced and were ready to act to make themselves heard. In that context, two young people from Monaco who were Prince Albert II Leadership in Post-Conflict Development Award winners had taken part in the United Nations Civil Society Conference held in Salt Lake City, United States, in August 2019. The global climate strike held in September 2019 on the sidelines of the Climate Action Summit was also a testament to children's activism.

74. *Ms. Farnqalo (Liberia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

75. **Mr. Al Khalil** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that efforts were being made to reach children recruited by armed terrorist groups in order to save them from exploitation and ensure their rehabilitation and integration into society. Children were being interrogated and arrested in accordance with the country's laws on rehabilitation measures, which were governed by procedural rules that treated children as victims, irrespective of the criminal acts committed.

Those inflicting harm on children faced criminal prosecution.

76. Warnings had been issued to Member States refusing to receive their nationals who had committed terrorist acts, as well as their families, but the Government had received no response to date. There had been a deliberate denial by the enemies of the Syrian Arab Republic of crimes committed by the so-called international coalition, which amounted to war crimes whose victims were mostly women and children. It was legitimate to ask why there was such a disinterest in the children who had died during airstrikes launched by the international coalition on Dayr al-Zawr and surrounding areas in eastern Syria, where bodies remained under debris.

77. His country was a founding member of the United Nations and was committed to the principle of dialogue and cooperation that governed the relationship between the United Nations and Member States. On that basis, it condemned any attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the United Nations by implementing a plan of action involving militia without prior approval and coordination with legitimate Governments. The signing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict of a joint plan of action with splinter militia jeopardized the territorial integrity and unity of the country and violated the relevant Security Council resolutions. The ongoing crisis was the result of terrorism, which enjoyed the support of Arab, regional and international countries that provided terrorist groups with ammunition, equipment and weapons. The unilateral coercive measures imposed on the people and Government of the Syrian Arab Republic were a major cause of the escalation of the humanitarian crisis, which had an impact on the human rights of all Syrians, including children.

78. *Ms. Eyerhalde Geymonat (Uruguay), Vice-Chair, resumed the Chair.*

79. **Ms. Al-Omair** (Saudi Arabia) said that her country had adopted laws to protect children from violations, harm, neglect and exploitation. It also provided a suitable environment that allowed children to develop their skills and potential in accordance with its commitment under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The country's Vision 2030 reflected the importance attached to human rights and included a mechanism to raise awareness of the negative effects of child neglect. The National Family Safety Programme, launched in 2005, was aimed at protecting children from violence, and a 24-hour hotline had been set up to provide counselling to children and caregivers.

80. The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre had established a rehabilitation programme for children recruited by the Houthi movement militias and children affected by the armed conflict in Yemen. The programme was aimed at rehabilitating children, facilitating their reintegration into the education system and raising awareness of the risks of child recruitment and the legal responsibilities of recruiters. The country's efforts to rehabilitate children were not limited to nationals: children from the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen residing in Saudi Arabia were also entitled to free education and health-care services. Saudi Arabia provided humanitarian relief, including education, health services and vaccinations, to children in Yemen and supported the efforts of UNICEF and the World Health Organization to combat the cholera epidemic in that country.

81. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that, although the number of child soldiers in the world had stabilized, children were usually the first victims in times of armed conflict. For three years, in the north-western and south-western regions of Cameroon, secessionists had attacked children, burned down schools, killed teachers and threatened parents, depriving children of access to education. However, as a result of the Government's efforts, children had recently been able to return to school in that part of the country.

82. Children were equal in dignity to adults but should not have the same responsibilities. In that context, efforts were under way to combat the worst forms of child labour and to establish a juvenile penal system. Although children deserved to be consulted in issues that affected them, they should not be involved in political, ideological or social protests, including against climate change, regardless of how noble that cause may be. It was a sign that adults had failed as parents when children were recruited by armed groups as soldiers, when young girls were married too early and when students left their classrooms to demonstrate on the streets. Children needed to focus on succeeding at school and acquiring fundamental values in the comfort of their homes, surrounded by their families and under the authority of their parents.

83. **Ms. Al Kuwari** (Qatar) said that her country had devoted an important proportion of its international aid to the protection of children's rights, in particular in areas affected by national disasters and conflicts, and attached great importance to education as a key to development and to counter violent extremism. To that end, Qatar had provided substantial support to the Education Above All initiative in cooperation with its development partners. In line with the country's commitment to reinforcing cooperation and dialogue

globally, it had provided a grant to UNICEF to facilitate its efforts to support children, and was also looking forward to the opening of a UNICEF office in Doha, which would further promote children's rights in the region. Qatar was also making preparations for the opening in Doha of a United Nations centre on children in armed conflict, to be overseen by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.

84. In line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the new national development strategy, Qatar had enacted numerous legislative and executive measures to advance and protect the rights of children and remained committed to upholding its commitments pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, including by facilitating the healthy development of children, providing high-quality free education, conducting awareness-raising campaigns and offering services for children with disabilities.

85. **Ms. Irnawati Hj Mahir** (Brunei Darussalam) said that the laws of her country covered the various aspects of children's rights, including their protection and rehabilitation, trafficking in children and young persons, and the setting up of a juvenile court and action team on child protection, as mandated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Special Committee on the Family Institution, Women and Children had been set up to coordinate national efforts towards the promotion and protection of the rights of children, women and the family institution as the basic unit of society.

86. In the framework of the National Vision 2035, an education strategy had been adopted focused on early childhood education and programmes to promote lifelong learning and widen access to higher education. In addition to free primary education, children from lower-income families received other benefits such as grants and bursaries, subsidies and free tuition, textbooks, meals and school allowances, and children with disabilities enjoyed access to inclusive education and training courses to increase their employability and entrepreneurship skills. With respect to children's health, Brunei Darussalam had maintained high annual immunization coverage for children under 5 years of age, and a new subsidy scheme had been introduced that gave mothers of newborns free breast pumps and diapers. The Brunei Darussalam Children's Forum had been held to enhance children's knowledge of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and provided them with the opportunity to voice their views.

87. Brunei Darussalam had strengthened the enforcement of the Childcare Centre Act and the effective licensing of private childcare centres to ensure

their activities were physically safe, cognitively appropriate and conducive to the healthy development of children. At the regional level, the country had recently hosted the fifth ASEAN Children's Forum under the theme "Our Children; Our Future; Our ASEAN", during which participants had deliberated on the ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society.

88. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that children would always be more vulnerable to exploitation and suffering as they were less able to protect themselves from poverty, hunger, sexual violence, conflict and the resulting trauma. Their opportunities were particularly hindered when families became separated or when schools and health services were interrupted. Moreover, the consequences of human rights violations and abuses against children in terms of individual well-being and future economic opportunities were likely to last long into adulthood. Despite the significant advances that had been made in children's rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child continued to be implemented inconsistently.

89. It was necessary to remain vigilant regarding emerging twenty-first century challenges that threatened children's enjoyment of their human rights. Protracted conflicts and humanitarian crises, increasingly urbanized warfare and the impacts of climate change were creating unprecedented challenges for the international community; what remained unchanged was that children were disproportionately affected. Tackling or pre-empting those threats was a challenge that the international community could only overcome through cooperation, and in that context the United Kingdom supported the United Nations global pledge "For every child, every right". Domestically, it had introduced online children's rights training and impact assessments across the Government so that children's rights were fully integrated into human rights-related decisions and programming. Internationally, the Government was committed to strengthening protection for children in conflict situations, and had introduced the "Leave no girl behind" campaign to boost global investments in girl's education. The United Kingdom had announced that it would provide financial support for over 12 million children to attend school. In November 2019, it would host an international meeting on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, addressing, inter alia, improved support for children born of rape.

90. **Ms. de Martino** (Italy) said that the protection of children was at the core of her country's development action. Italy provided substantial support to UNICEF,

the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the other child-driven programmes of the United Nations development system related to early childhood protection, health and education, including the joint programme of UNFPA and UNICEF aimed at ending female genital mutilation. The fight against harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage, was among the top priority areas for Italy, which had worked to ensure the highest possible safeguard standards for children in armed conflicts during both its 2017 term on the Security Council and its current mandate on the Human Rights Council. As schools must remain safe places for learning in all circumstances, especially during armed conflicts, Italy had allocated more than 10 per cent of its humanitarian budget for 2018 to emergency interventions in the areas of education and school infrastructure.

91. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that the plans and programmes established by the international community would make no difference to the lives of children if Member States did not work towards the establishment of a more just and equitable international order centred on human beings, their dignity and their well-being. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had become the most widely ratified human rights instrument in history and had helped to transform the lives of children worldwide. It was therefore regrettable that the United States of America had not yet ratified the Convention, in what constituted a lack of commitment to children. However, it was also consistent with the daily actions of that State, in which inequalities were so evident that in 2016, a total of 18 per cent of children lived in poverty. The United States policy of detaining migrant children in detention centres and separating them from their families was alarming and should be denounced as a violation of international law. In addition, the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement constituted a complete disregard for children's right to live in a healthy environment.

92. As a State party to the Convention, Cuba had drawn up national policies and programmes integrating its principles and focused on the areas of health, education, disability care, sport, culture and social prevention. Cuba devoted more than half of its national budget to health, education and social welfare, and health care and education were free. Cuba had ended 2018 with an infant mortality rate of 4.0 per 1,000 live births, all Cuban children were vaccinated at birth against 13 communicable diseases, and priority was given to the early detection of congenital disease. Cuba had been the first country to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and syphilis, as confirmed by the World Health Organization. Those achievements

had been attained despite the United States embargo that had lasted over half a century.

93. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that his Government had adopted policies aimed at strengthening Nicaraguan families and preventing violence, which included a programme to assist children in extreme poverty, an early childhood programme and a social welfare project. The Child and Adolescence Code punished physical abuse of children and adolescents, and the country's social welfare system had expanded its network of child development centres from 60 to 270. The country's family councils, which had assisted more than 42,000 people in 2018 through an early warning system for violence prevention, worked to strengthen the values of respect and solidarity between couples, families and communities with a view to creating a better environment for children. Almost 3,000 officials working in the social welfare system had received special training and over 1 million pregnancy and childcare guidelines had been distributed to families.

94. A strategy to promote a culture of dignity, respect, reconciliation and peace among families and communities had been launched. that warned of the risks of global communication, imported cultural norms and other aspects altering the country's culture and traditions. The Government had launched reforestation initiatives and other activities to promote environmental values in children. The accomplishments of Nicaragua had been recognized by various United Nations entities, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and UNICEF.

95. **Mr. Bastida Peydro** (Spain) said that his country was strongly committed to the promotion of and respect for children's rights and strove to fulfil its commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto. On the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care for Children, his delegation welcomed the fact that a resolution on the rights of children without parental care would be negotiated at the current session.

96. In recent years, Spain had been in a process of deinstitutionalization, in which family life was prioritized and efforts were made to keep children in residential care for the shortest possible time, taking into account the best interest of the child, and in which infants under the age of 3 years were only kept in residential care under exceptional circumstances. Efforts were also under way to strengthen and support families as the central nucleus for child protection. In that context, his Government had launched a national

strategy for the prevention of poverty and social exclusion for the period 2019–2023, the first strategic goal of which was to combat poverty with a focus on child poverty. To assist vulnerable families, additional child protection measures had been established whereby it was prohibited to cut off the electricity supply to households in which children under the age of 16 years resided. The General Budget for 2019 included a report on the impact of public spending on children and families.

97. **Ms. Kipiani** (Georgia) said that children's rights were one of the goals of her country's human rights strategy for the period 2014–2020, which included initiatives aimed at preventing the sexual exploitation of children and developing rehabilitation services for the victims of sexual abuse. An inter-agency commission on child rights, established in 2016, was responsible for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and for ensuring effective coordination among State institutions. The commission was in the process of drafting a national action plan to combat violence against children. In 2017, Georgia had joined the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. In September 2019, the Committee on the Rights of the Child had examined the initial report of Georgia related to the Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Parliament had adopted a code on children's rights and several laws had been amended to ensure the provision of identification documents to street children and to strengthen the role of social workers.

98. Severe and systematic human rights violations were affecting children in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia. The few remaining Georgian schools in those areas had shifted to the Russian language, thus denying students the right to receive an education in their native tongue. Multiple restrictions on freedom of movement across the occupation line and the closing of so-called crossing points severely restricted the movement of children who attended Georgian classes on Georgian-controlled territory. The absence of international monitoring mechanisms further deteriorated the humanitarian and human rights situation on the ground. In contrast, the Government's peace initiative "A Step to a Better Future" sought to improve access to quality education for children affected by conflict by enhancing educational opportunities for the residents of the occupied territories.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.