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Chair: Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic)
later: Ms. Al-thani (Vice-Chair) (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) ([A/77/41](#), [A/77/140](#), [A/77/143](#), [A/77/221](#) and [A/77/282](#))

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) ([A/77/309-E/2023/5](#))

1. **Ms. Sánchez García** (Colombia), speaking also on behalf of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, South Africa and Tunisia, said that the values of multilateralism, consensus and constructive dialogue constituted a common feature that brought countries together in advocating for human rights, gender equality and sustainable development. The link between those values and causes was clear: education. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an additional year of school could increase a girl's earnings as an adult by up to 20 per cent; some countries lost more than \$1 billion a year by failing to educate girls to the same level as boys; and 10 per cent fewer girls under 17 would become pregnant in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia if all girls had a primary education.

2. As stated by the Secretary General in his report on the follow-up to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children ([A/77/309-E/2023/5](#)), good health, education and secure livelihoods developed human capital, and human capital drove national economies. However, the consequences of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic were still being felt and, with school closures and remote learning, an estimated 11 million girls might not go back to school. Moreover, approximately 64.3 per cent of 10-year-olds were unable to read; because of school closures, 370 million children in 150 States were missing out on school meals; and 10 million more girls than previously estimated were at risk of early marriage by 2030. In that context, the Third Committee must not act in a vacuum, but rather build upon the discussions held during the recent Transforming Education Summit, in which 130 countries had committed to prioritize education, including gender-sensitive education policies.

3. Protecting and promoting human rights and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls required collective efforts. Those values were universal, they were not part of the agenda of one country or one region, and only by working together constructively and ambitiously would it be possible to create a better world for future generations.

4. **Ms. Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her country was continuing to work towards building child protection systems, including by improving legislative frameworks, identifying and supporting victims and survivors and providing care, recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration services in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations. Her country's introductory report on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been submitted in 2021.

5. Children's health was among the highest priorities in her country's health policies and system and, in that regard, Iran had continued to conduct mass immunization programmes. Moreover, the COVID-19 vaccine was available to children over 5 years of age. National policies and programmes aimed at improving health indicators had led to several achievements, including a decrease in the under-5 mortality rate.

6. To protect children's rights, Iran had adopted a law on the protection of children and adolescents and a mechanism for protecting children and adolescents in cyberspace. The legal system also criminalized any interaction with children in cyberspace aimed at sexual harassment or having sexual relations. The Civil Law had been amended in 2019 to grant Iranian citizenship to children born to Iranian mothers and non-Iranian fathers.

7. For more than four decades, her country had generously hosted millions of refugees, displaced persons, migrants and foreign aliens, providing facilities for their education, nutrition and health without international support and with the harshest unilateral sanctions ever imposed on a country. In that regard, her delegation had grave concerns over the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the health of children in developing countries, such as those imposed by the United States of America against the people of Iran, including children. For example, children suffering from epidermolysis bullosa, thalassemia and other rare diseases were in danger of death because they lacked access to the necessary medication. The United States must be held to account for crimes against humanity. Children's best interests should be the sole consideration in all measures that affected them.

8. **Mr. Cheng Liang** (Malaysia) said that his country was committed to promoting and safeguarding the rights and well-being of children, including in situations of armed conflict, particularly in occupied territories. No effort should be spared in keeping children out of harm's way and providing them with avenues to realize their full potential. In fulfilling its obligation under the

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Malaysia had enacted the Child Act of 2001, amended in 2016, under which child protection teams and centres had been established to mobilize community participation in preventive and rehabilitative programmes for at-risk children. The National Council for Children had also been established, providing a platform for child representatives to present recommendations to the Government on issues related to the protection, care, rehabilitation, development and participation of children at the national, regional and international levels.

9. His Government was developing a comprehensive national policy and plan of action on children, guided by the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, covering issues such as juvenile justice, bullying, mental health, child exploitation, child marriage, climate change and online protection. The new policy and plan of action incorporated elements from other child-related policies and was being formulated in consultation with government agencies, child representatives, non-governmental organizations and academia. In addition, the Government had taken measures to strengthen children's institutions at the State and district levels by increasing the number of protection and probation officers. It had also initiated a "family-based care" pilot project, with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), aimed at preventing the unnecessary detention and institutionalization of children in need by placing them in family settings rather than in welfare institutions.

10. **Ms. Al-thani** (Qatar) said that her country had made significant progress in promoting and protecting children's rights through the adoption of legal and executive measures. Many of those measures were part of Qatar National Vision 2030 and were in line with her country's commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

11. Qatar attached special importance to the right to education. State investment in education exceeded 10 per cent of the Government's total spending, one of the highest rates in the world. Over the past decade, the country had, through the Qatar Fund for Development, donated approximately \$980 million in education-related foreign aid, or 17 per cent of the State's overall aid budget. The failure to ensure a child's right to an education, particularly in conflict situations and humanitarian crises, undermined human rights, sustainable development and the economy. Accordingly, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/275](#) in which 9 September had been proclaimed the International Day to Protect Education from Attack, the Education Above All Foundation, headquartered in

Doha, had launched the TRACE data portal, which collected information on attacks on educational institutions. Qatar had also taken part in the preparations for the Transforming Education Summit convened by the Secretary-General in September 2022.

12. Recognizing the importance of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Qatar had continued to provide support to the Special Representative's Office in New York. In June 2022, the Analysis and Outreach Hub of the Special Representative's Office had been opened in Doha, which would contribute to building institutional knowledge on child protection efforts and would implement practical approaches to help mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict.

13. Qatar was also committed to supporting UNICEF and had renewed its agreement to contribute \$8 million for the period 2022–2023. In addition, a partnership between UNICEF, the Qatar Fund for Development and the Qatari telecom company Ooredoo was aimed at building back better in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

14. **Ms. Chakir** (Luxembourg), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her country was a strong advocate for children's rights. However, on the basis of consultations conducted with children and young people, it was clear that much remained to be done for Luxembourg and other Member States to fully implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, children from certain socioeconomic backgrounds did not have the same opportunities as more privileged children, and the COVID-19 pandemic had had a significant negative impact on the mental and physical well-being of children, who had been unable to take part in social and physical activities during lockdown. At a time when children's need for professional support structures was increasing, there was a shortage of child psychiatrists in her country. Children between 12 and 18 years of age were in a particularly complicated situation in that regard, given that they were considered too old for paediatric care and too young for adult care.

15. **Ms. Bertemes** (Luxembourg), speaking as a youth delegate, said that every child had the right to be protected from sexual abuse. The twenty-first century was the age of new technology and innovation, but also of online dangers. The ease of access to certain platforms made children increasingly vulnerable to human rights violations and sexual predators. Although some measures had been taken to reduce risks, such as the establishment of age limits on social media platforms, children continued to be exposed to dangers and offensive content. It was therefore necessary to

adopt more effective protection systems. However, no legal regulations had been established on online violence, cyberbullying or other forms of digital aggression, especially sexual violence.

16. The sex education provided in her country's schools was outdated and needed to be adapted to the real needs of children and youth, given that it rarely addressed the concept of consent or the procedures to follow in cases of sexual assault. A comprehensive age-appropriate approach based on gender equality was needed to enable future generations to assert their rights and the rights of others, make decisions about their health and have access to sexual and reproductive health services, and to improve young people's ability to engage in equitable relationships and experiences based on mutual consent. Without appropriate sex education, children and youth would not be able to determine whether certain external behaviours were appropriate.

17. **Mr. Ndoye** (Senegal) said that his delegation welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution [76/306](#), on the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office, which symbolized the international community's determination to make young people real actors in defining the policies that affected them. It also welcomed the holding of the Transforming Education Summit, which had made it possible to lay the groundwork for a new vision for transforming education systems and to mobilize efforts to make up for the loss of schooling caused by COVID-19. The pandemic had severely strained governance systems, exacerbated inequalities, increased poverty and heightened the vulnerability of children, especially those living in conflict zones. Cooperation needed to be strengthened to rebuild social protection systems for children. New strategies were also needed to improve health, provide quality education, combat diseases such as HIV/AIDS and protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence.

18. While significant progress had been made, important challenges remained, especially for girls, including in terms of child mortality, child marriage and unhealthy information and communications technology use. The protection and promotion of children's rights was a priority in his country's public policies, including in the Emerging Senegal Plan, aimed at combating poverty and reducing inequality, among other issues. To achieve targets 3.1 and 3.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, Senegal was working to strengthen the social protection system for children and combat child mortality, including by providing free health care for children aged 0 to 5 years. To counter the harmful effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, his country had extended the Single National Register to vulnerable

groups, in particular children, and had implemented a national family security grant programme, a universal health coverage programme and a programme for persons with disabilities. His Government had also established the Children's Ombudsperson and the National Children's Parliament and was drafting the Children's Code.

19. **Ms. Meunluang** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the adverse impacts of multiple crises ranging from the global COVID-19 pandemic to natural calamities and armed conflict had continued to undermine the well-being of children globally. Urgent action was needed to ensure inclusive recovery, including by adopting measures to promote and protect the rights of children. At the national level, her Government was providing social services and emergency assistance for vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities; ensuring equal access to offline and online learning; supporting early childhood education; and promoting the right to health care for all children, including through free vaccination and immunization campaigns.

20. Her country had successfully conducted a voluntary national review for children and youth consultations, which had highlighted the importance of implementing policies to ensure sustainable and resilient recovery in the post-pandemic period, and it was prioritizing gender equality, children's rights and biodiversity protection. Committed to combating violence against women and children, her country provided counselling services for women and children at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking, domestic violence and sexual exploitation.

21. The National Commission for Mothers and Children, in cooperation with UNICEF, had organized a series of child and youth consultations nationwide in preparation for her country's seventh periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, to be submitted in 2023.

22. **Mr. Dang** Tran Nam Trung (Viet Nam) said that actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic should be guided by the principles of non-discrimination and the best interests of the child. It was important to ensure that the voices of children were heard, and to keep in mind that the future of every country depended on how it invested in its children and young people. In that regard, Viet Nam attached great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, and education was a top priority policy to ensure the country's stability and long-term development.

23. Recent developments at the national level included the establishment of the National Committee for Children, a telephone hotline for children and a national action plan focused on child protection, education and participation in issues directly affecting them. The Government had strengthened relevant legislation to better safeguard children's rights, and initiatives had been launched to improve nutrition, health care and education for underprivileged children. As a result, all children in Viet Nam attended primary and secondary school and had access to adequate health care; 16 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine had been given to children between 5 and 12 years of age; and measures had been taken during the pandemic to prevent disruptions to educational activities, including by facilitating online education and providing computers to students in vulnerable communities.

24. At the regional level, Viet Nam had been working with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children to promote gender quality, eliminate all forms of violence against women and children, strengthen child protection systems and address emerging issues affecting women and children.

25. **Mr. Lire** (Ethiopia) said Ethiopia had several education-related policy frameworks in place that prioritized the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, including the 2010 National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education and the 2014 Gender Strategy for the Education and Training Sector. The primary education expansion programmes adopted by his Government had led to 95 per cent education coverage and had brought schools closer to children in rural areas, reducing the incidence of early and forced marriage and increasing attendance rates among girls. The rights of children were guaranteed under the Constitution of Ethiopia, including their right to be cared for by their parents or legal guardians, to be protected from cruel or inhumane treatment in schools and not to be subjected to exploitative practices. The primary consideration of courts of law, administrative authorities and legislative bodies must be the best interest of the child.

26. His country's child rights legal protection regime included the revised Family Code and the Criminal Code, under which progressive child protection laws had been enacted in the areas of labour, cybercrime and the smuggling of persons, and severe punishments were provided for offences related to child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. In addition, Ethiopia was a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and

the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

27. The challenges related to ensuring full access to health care and education and eradicating child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation were difficult to resolve in a society with such diverse cultural identities, practices and belief systems. Those challenges, combined with social and economic issues, climate change and conflict-related risks, required a collective response. In that regard, there was a need for greater commitment and action to increase the capacity of developing countries to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups that had been severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, climate change and rising fuel prices.

28. **Ms. Mudrenko** (Ukraine) said the only way to protect and promote the rights of children in Ukraine was to stop the Russian aggression, which had severely affected 7 million children in her country and represented a grave violation of their rights. Every day, the right to life and health was being violated through shelling, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and the use of prohibited ammunition, which to date had killed at least 422 children and injured more than 800. With regard to the right to a life without violence, Ukrainian law enforcement agencies had received reports of horrific acts of physical and sexual violence against children committed by Russian invaders; millions of children had been forced to leave their homes; and almost two out of every three children had been displaced.

29. With regard to the right to a family, many children in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine had been left without parents or legal representatives. The situation of forced deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia, Belarus and the occupied territories required particular attention and a response from the United Nations and the international community. Russia itself had declared that more than half a million Ukrainian children had been transferred to its various regions. The Ukrainian authorities had identified 7,894 children who had been deported to Russia or to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, and only 59 had been returned to their relatives in Ukraine. Children from the occupied territories had been transferred to Russia and illegally placed for adoption. On 23 August 2022, the Russian Department of Family and Childhood had publicly announced that over 1,000 Ukrainian children from Mariupol seized by the Russian army had been transferred illegally to Russia. More than 300 children were being held in specialized institutions in Krasnodarsky krai. Ukraine called on the United Nations and its Member States to demand from Russia

the rapid and safe return of all children forcibly deported from Ukraine.

30. With regard to the right to education, only 50 per cent of schools in Ukraine were able to provide in-person schooling, while other schools did not meet the appropriate security requirements. More than 2,600 schools had suffered bombing and shelling, and 309 had been destroyed completely. To protect children from Russian aggression and to stop and prevent further violations against them, Ukraine continued its constructive engagement and cooperation with United Nations bodies, in particular with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

31. Her delegation commended the efforts of UNICEF to address the humanitarian consequences of the aggression, save children's lives and protect millions of Ukrainian children affected by the war. It also expressed its sincere appreciation to States that were providing humanitarian assistance and shelter to Ukrainian children and addressing their basic needs, and called on the international community to strengthen joint efforts to protect the rights of Ukrainian children and take all possible measures to stop further suffering and violence against them as a result of the Russian aggression.

32. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993 as well as both of its Optional Protocols. All Syrian law took into account the principle of special protection for children, as stipulated in the Syrian Constitution. The country was continuing its efforts to assist children recruited by armed terrorist groups, pursuant to Act No. 11/2013, which also provided for legal procedures and specialized courts to address child victims. All forms of violence, physical abuse and sexual assault were subject to harsh criminal punishments, including, in cases where the victim was under the age of 15 and threatened with a weapon, the death penalty.

33. The Syrian Government had promulgated Act No. 21/2021 on the rights of the child, a comprehensive piece of legislation aimed at safeguarding the best interests of children, including children with disabilities. The Act safeguarded rights related to the family, health and education, as well as the right to personal security and protection from recruitment and trafficking.

34. Syria also attached special importance to the issue of education. The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with UNICEF, launched a campaign at the beginning of every school year to ensure high levels of enrolment,

especially in areas under the control of armed terrorist groups. Syria attached great importance to education as critical to positive and sustainable social change. The country had participated in the Secretary-General's Transforming Education Summit the previous September and had issued a national report on the subject. As children and young people made up 70 per cent of the Syrian population, the country was committed to ensuring the basic rights of children, despite the unilateral coercive measures and economic embargo imposed on the Syrian people for political reasons.

35. In Syria, more than 53,000 women and children with terrorist family members were being held in illegal prisons in areas outside the control of the Government. The worst violations of human rights and children's rights occurred in those centres. A section of Ghuguayran prison, for example, held over 500 children in horrific conditions. The Syrian delegation therefore called for all such detained persons to be brought home as soon as possible, rehabilitated and reintegrated into their original communities. Otherwise, if left in such an extremist and intolerant environment, they could eventually become terrorists themselves.

36. The Syrian Arab Republic stressed its commitment to cooperation and dialogue with the United Nations in furtherance of their shared goals, including the protection of children in Syria. It also stressed its opposition to the politicization of human rights issues.

37. **Mr. Kim Song** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that many children worldwide were suffering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflict, climate change, poverty, hunger and violence. In some countries that claimed to be advanced in terms of human rights, children were victims of gun-related crimes, maltreatment within the family, human trafficking, forced labour and sexual violence. The reality clearly demonstrated that the promotion and protection of the rights of the child was not dependent on material wealth but was a matter related to the political will of the Governments concerned.

38. His Government continued to improve the legal mechanisms for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, including by adopting and amending the Socialist Constitution and through a law on the protection and promotion of children's rights and a decree on the introduction of a 12-year compulsory education system. His country considered it a priority to provide children with access to nutrition, health and education, even in difficult situations of scarcity. In that context, his Government had formulated a State policy to provide all children with dairy products and school uniforms, and schools had been built or renovated. In

May 2022, when the COVID-19 pandemic had spread across the country, the State had prioritized the provision of medical supplies and food for children.

39. His country attached great importance to international exchange and cooperation in the field of the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. In that regard, it had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and was faithfully implementing its obligations under the Convention and actively cooperating with the relevant international organizations, including by submitting six periodic reports between 1998 and 2017.

40. **Ms. Al Bin Khalil** (Bahrain) said that her country understood the importance of meeting the needs of children, protecting their rights, providing them with a safe environment, nurturing their talents and implementing national health, education and social protection programmes. Bahrain, through its National Commission for Childhood, had continued to assist in the development and promotion of projects to ensure the rights of the child and had passed legislation on child protection. The Commission, in cooperation with UNICEF, other United Nations bodies and governmental and non-governmental organizations, worked to implement and follow up on national strategies related to children.

41. Bahrain had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. In 2012, it had adopted a law that set out the rights of the child and the various responsibilities of relevant agencies to safeguard those rights. In 2015, it had passed a law protecting children from family violence and in 2017 had passed a law to anchor the rights of the child within the institution of the family. In a significant step forward, Bahrain had passed a restorative justice law that provided for the formation of a special committee and courts for children.

42. Bahrain had taken steps to alleviate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had adversely affected the mental health and educational attainment of children owing to school closures. Schools in Bahrain continued to operate remotely through investments in technology. According to a study by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the education system in Bahrain had not been affected by the pandemic and remained highly ranked among Arab States, with elementary and secondary school enrolment returning to 100 per cent.

43. **Mr. Dimitrov** (Bulgaria) said that his Government had implemented a number of targeted measures promoting the rights and well-being of all children, with special attention paid to early childhood development and to equal access to inclusive and quality education

for all, including children with disabilities and refugee and migrant children. In that regard, Bulgaria had welcomed over 130,000 Ukrainian refugees following the Russian military aggression, and was working to provide a safe and inclusive environment for refugee children, including by enabling them to follow the Ukrainian school curriculum. In May 2022, his Government had created an interinstitutional coordination mechanism to support unaccompanied children or foreign children separated from their families, including children seeking or receiving international or temporary protection.

44. His country had made significant progress in deinstitutionalizing childcare, including through special measures to prevent child abandonment, encourage good parenting and provide foster care and integrated services in the community. As a result, all 133 specialized institutions for children had been closed, with the exception of four homes providing children with medical and social care, which would also be shut down once a suitable alternative had been found.

45. Committed to ending violence against children, his Government had launched campaigns to strengthen child protection systems and raise awareness. At the international level, Bulgaria remained committed to furthering the rights of children, including as Co-Chair of the Group of Friends for Children and Sustainable Development Goals and in its upcoming role on the UNICEF Executive Board. In addition, his country had taken part in the organization of the recent Transforming Education Summit.

46. **Ms. Andújar** (Dominican Republic) said that although progress had been made in the protection of children's rights, the world was still not fit for children, in particular given the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts and other crises. Of particular concern was the increase in cases of violence against children and the alarming rise in child, early and forced marriages.

47. Her country had strengthened its institutional child protection measures, including through increased public investments, interinstitutional coordination and partnerships aimed at protecting children and adolescents against all forms of violence. The Office for Children and Adolescents had been established in 2020 to promote children's rights; an Act had been enacted prohibiting child marriage; and awareness programmes had been launched on positive parenting and comprehensive sex education as part of a policy for the prevention of teenage pregnancy and early marriage. In addition, dialogues had been held between the Government and various stakeholders on the protection of children and adolescents against violence, including

through initiatives focused on prevention; temporary homes had been established for children and adolescents in situations of social and family vulnerability; and early childhood care centres were providing services to children under 5 years of age and their families.

48. As an island developing State, the Dominican Republic was particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and was seriously affected by hurricanes. It was therefore essential to improve the capacity to collect data on the vulnerability of children and adolescents to the effects of climate change.

49. **Mr. Hamid** (Maldives) said that the rights of children were taken extremely seriously in his country. Two key pieces of national legislation had been enacted to protect and promote the rights of the child: the Juvenile Justice Act and the Child Rights Protection Act. The latter significantly strengthened the national child rights framework and aligned it more closely with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also provided for the establishment of the Children's Ombudsperson's Office and the creation of the Child Rights Protection Council, which advised on formulating policies essential for child protection on the basis of emerging issues. To further strengthen child protection, 19 family and children service centres had been established across the country to report cases and to provide social and psychosocial support for victims of abuse and exploitation, including children.

50. In line with its international obligations, Maldives had ratified in 2019 the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. It was a point of pride that the country had been a leading negotiator of, and one of the first signatories to, the Optional Protocol, thus becoming a party to all three Optional Protocols to the Convention.

51. The outbreak of COVID-19 had had a significant impact on the economy and reduced the capacity to address socioeconomic challenges. However, the Government had taken various measures to protect children and the most vulnerable, including forming a national emergency team with strategic plans and mechanisms for the management of shelters for children and older persons, and strengthening the capacity to monitor and respond to domestic violence and child abuse. The temporary restrictive measures enacted during the pandemic, including school closures, had also affected children's education. To ensure the continuation of their learning, the Government had facilitated virtual schooling and tutoring mechanisms.

Investing in the personal and intellectual development of children was too important a priority to neglect.

52. Maldives was firmly committed to ensuring "every right for every child". His Government wanted the world to be a safe space for children where they did not experience violence, neglect or the violation of their human rights. Every child should be able to reach their full potential.

53. **Ms. Koudougou Noangma** (Burkina Faso) said that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were still being felt while security, humanitarian and climate change crises were exacerbating the vulnerability of children and undermining the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In Burkina Faso children represented 51.8 per cent of the population, and faced poverty, gender and disability inequality, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, and the loss of learning opportunities. Those factors of vulnerability were unfortunately accentuated by the security crisis the country had been experiencing since 2015.

54. To improve the promotion and protection of children's rights, Burkina Faso had strengthened its regulatory framework, including strategies for the protection of children. The Government had adopted the Strategy for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Marriage for the period 2016–2025, and had strengthened the legal framework by broadening the definition of marriage to cover marital unions performed according to traditional or religious practices. An emergency plan to combat child marriage had also been put in place in areas facing security challenges. Previous initiatives and the implementation of a new strategic plan for the elimination of female genital mutilation had resulted in a downward trend in the practice.

55. In the area of education, basic public education was compulsory and free for children aged 6 to 16. Similarly, the Strategy for Education in Emergencies for the period 2019–2024 had achieved significant results in reducing learning losses linked to the pandemic and the ongoing security crisis. A Memorandum of Understanding had been signed with the United Nations system on the transfer and care of children encountered during security operations. Initiatives were also under way to prevent the recruitment of children by armed terrorist groups and to promote their release and reintegration into society. Other actions included the establishment of 31 transit centres for children in hardship and the creation of 761 community child protection zones in areas that faced major security challenges. In the fight against child trafficking, the implementation of the Strategy to Combat the Worst

Forms of Child Labour for the period 2019–2023 had resulted in the prosecution of 38 perpetrators of child trafficking.

56. **Mr. Mohammad** (Kuwait) said that current global challenges, including COVID-19 and other diseases, economic and financial crises, food insecurity, famine and armed conflicts and wars, had directly affected children. Extreme poverty had increased, pushing children to the edge of famine and endangering their physical and mental health. Disruptions to education had made children susceptible to recruitment and violent extremism.

57. All of the Sustainable Development Goals touched on issues that affected children and offered a comprehensive approach to meeting their needs. They prioritized the dignity and the right of children to a life free of fear and violence. Target 16.2, for example, was aimed at ending all forms of violence against children. However, current economic, political, social and climate challenges had undermined efforts to move forward towards the achievement of the Goals.

58. The Kuwaiti Constitution stipulated that the family was the foundation of society and that its mainstays were religion, morals and the love of country. It provided that the law should preserve the family and strengthen its bonds and protect mothers and children. It also provided that the State should protect young people from exploitation and negligence and guarantee education as a cornerstone of social advancement. In view of those principles, and in the light of instruments ratified by Kuwait, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, the country had adopted a number of relevant laws. In 2015, Kuwait had established a family court and had adopted a law on the rights of the child that guaranteed the rights to life, to a cohesive family unit, to education, health and protection from all forms of violence or harm.

59. Kuwait attached great importance to its young people as they were the building blocks of national prosperity. Education was the central pillar of human development and important for progress towards the achievement of Kuwait Vision 2035. The country had worked assiduously to close the gender gap in education. The rate of enrolment of women and girls at secondary and university institutions had risen faster than that of men and boys, contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

60. *Ms. Al-thani (Qatar), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

61. **Mr. Pisarevich** (Belarus) said that Belarus attached great importance to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto. A dedicated national committee was responsible for coordinating work to improve the lives of children in Belarus and protect their rights and interests. The institutions of marriage and the family, as the foundations of a child's development, were also protected by the State. Efforts to that end included instilling family values and a responsible attitude to parenthood in teenagers and providing extensive state support for parents. Special medical, schooling and professional support was available for children with disabilities and work was under way on including children with developmental issues in standard schooling and leisure activities with their peers.

62. In view of the challenges of modern-day life, providing all children and teenagers with access to professional mental health support was important. Social and mental health services were therefore available in all educational institutions to support children and teenagers and also to prevent child neglect and violence against children.

63. Belarus would continue to ensure that its State policy served the interests of children for the continued development of Belarusian society and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Motivated, educated and proactive young people were an asset to the State and a guarantee of a country's prosperity and future economic security.

64. **Mr. Edokpa** (Nigeria) said that his country strove to place the interests of children first and create a world fit for them. It was a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and did all it could to ensure that children were not unlawfully recruited and victimized by armed groups. The country treated such children as victims and not as violators of the law. To address the high number of unaccompanied, separated or orphaned children, the Government was working for their rehabilitation, reintegration and family reunification. It also worked to protect educational institutions from attack and provide safe environments for learning so that children could stay in school.

65. Non-State actors often took advantage of the importance the country placed on education through their attacks and kidnappings and by holding educators for ransom. The Safe Schools Initiative and other programmes were major steps taken to protect learning environments for children. An emergency curriculum prepared by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council enabled children to be

mainstreamed into formal school systems as soon as conditions were appropriate. Children represented hope, joy and the future, and all of the current challenges, including the pandemic, the expansion of digital space, armed conflict and climate change, should be factored into any measures and responses to address the situations of vulnerable children.

66. **Mr. Gunaratna** (Sri Lanka) said that his country was an early signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had enacted several laws to protect the rights of children. Sri Lanka had not only ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, but had also adopted the Children's Charter. The latter was an important policy document that ensured that the standards of the Convention would guide law reform and enforcement, policy formulation and resource allocation.

67. Sri Lanka strongly condemned all forms of violence against children. Child and women bureaux has been established in police stations and child protection officers were posted at all divisional secretariats across the country. Furthermore, the Government had taken concrete steps towards rehabilitating all children forcibly recruited by non-State actors during conflict. Upon completion of rehabilitation, they were released to their families. The rehabilitation programme ensured that such children received their formal education and underwent vocational training programmes that allowed them to integrate into society.

68. Adequate nutrition was vital for ensuring that children of all socioeconomic backgrounds could enjoy good health. Quality education and health care for all was at the core of social protection policies and provided the foundation for Sri Lanka to mitigate the effects of the global learning crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sri Lanka also aimed to bridge the digital divide and ensure that no child would be left behind.

69. Sri Lanka applied forward-looking, holistic and gender-responsive policies with a view to fully implementing the 2030 Agenda and equipping the younger generation to take on future challenges with confidence.

70. **Mr. Pereira Sosa** (Paraguay) said that the population of Paraguay was mostly young, which was an advantage in terms of achieving sustainable development, but it also generated a fundamental responsibility in terms of responding to the needs of children and adolescents, protecting their rights and providing them with opportunities that would benefit society as a whole. In that context, his Government had adopted the National Plan for Children and Adolescents

for the period 2022–2024, created in collaboration with civil society and parents, youth and faith-based organizations. The National Plan, aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of children and adolescents and encouraging their full participation in their families and communities, as well as in decision-making processes, was created under the National System for the Promotion and Protection of Children and Adolescents. It included a series of objectives, lines of action, expected results, measurement indicators and States institutions responsible for its implementation.

71. All sectors of society should be committed to approaching the needs of children in a serious and responsible manner, avoiding disinformation, focusing on children's best interests and fulfilling their commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

72. **Ms. Umulisa** (Rwanda) said that her Government was committed to placing the family at the centre of development as a prerequisite for achieving equitable and sustainable development. The Strategic Plan for the Integrated Child Rights Policy in Rwanda had set out the clear guiding principle that every child mattered and was important to society, including the children left behind. Children were a priority and therefore every action that affected them must be guided by an assessment of its impact. Children could and should hold opinions and participate, directly and indirectly, in matters affecting them. They must be protected from all types of abuse, exploitation and violence in schools, communities and homes.

73. The Government had engaged in a project that transformed registered orphanages and returned orphans in institutional care to their extended families or placed them with foster parents. That reform had led to over 3,000 children returning to their families and, most importantly, had improved the entire child protection system. Furthermore, Rwanda had introduced free primary education as part of a government policy to improve school enrolment and the attendance of children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a result, primary school enrolment in Rwanda currently stood at approximately 95 per cent.

74. The Government had formulated key child protection policies such as the Rwanda Child Online Protection Policy, which was designed to mitigate the risks and harms associated with the use of digital technologies by children and thus enable them to safely navigate the digital world. A workforce of professional social workers, psychologists, legal experts, police and almost 30,000 community child protection volunteers had also been established to help identify and respond

to cases of violence, abuse and neglect involving children. In addition, the Government had enacted the Early Childhood Development Policy, which fostered the physical, cognitive, language, social, emotional and psychological development of children up to 6 years of age while also providing support to their parents and caregivers. To date, more than 31,000 early childhood development centres had been established to offer relevant services. With such centres, the Government aimed to ensure universal access to a range of services for all children under 6 years of age and thereby contribute to human capital development.

75. **Ms. Samai** (Algeria) said that her country had ratified many international and regional instruments on the protection of the rights of the child, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The Government had also enacted laws enshrining the rights of the child and assigning primary responsibility to the State to protect children from all forms of harm, violence, exploitation or physical, psychological or sexual abuse. Measures had been taken to safeguard children's lives, to ensure a sound upbringing and to protect them during disasters, wars and armed conflicts. Algerian law criminalized child labour and protected children from consumer fraud. It also recognized the responsibility of parents to protect and provide for children.

76. UNICEF had commended Algeria for its achievements in promoting and protecting children's rights and ensuring their access to education, health care and social protection. UNICEF had also welcomed the country's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially target 8.7 on ending child labour in all its forms by 2025 and eradicating forced labour. The National Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Childhood had developed national programmes aimed at tackling all forms of violence and exploitation and raising awareness of the importance of civil society in that regard. The work of the Commission was supported by social workers and psychologists working in the area of child protection. Given the importance of education for ensuring a better future, education was free and mandatory for all children between the ages of 6 and 16, a policy which had led to universal school enrolment.

77. The issue of children and armed conflict was of great importance. It was therefore necessary to address the root causes of conflicts, ensure justice and guarantee accountability for the perpetrators of violations against children. That issue was complicated by the intersection

of conflict, trafficking in persons and the cross-border smuggling of persons, which required intensified efforts and cooperation and the development of flexible child protection mechanisms.

78. Algeria had a rich history related to its war of liberation and its experience in addressing the effects of that war after regaining its sovereignty. For that reason, it had been chosen as a member of a committee that worked to prepare the study on the evolution of the children and armed conflict mandate. It was absolutely clear that much remained to be done when it came to protecting children and adapting the mandate to the new realities of conflict.

79. **Ms. Mavale** (Mozambique) said that the future of humanity was closely linked to the investment made in the well-being of people in vulnerable situations, including children severely affected by the challenges that the international community was facing due to the unprecedented and multidimensional crises. The international community as a whole bore the primary responsibility for ensuring the promotion and protection of the rights of children everywhere, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international and regional instruments. Children were the leaders of tomorrow and Governments must act to secure a better and prosperous future for them. In fact, no internationally agreed commitments could be achieved without the realization of the rights of children.

80. Mozambique, as an incoming member of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund for the term 2023–2025, was committed to continuing to advocate for the protection of children's rights, helping them to meet their basic needs and expanding their opportunities to reach their full potential. The well-being of children was a concept clearly enshrined in the Constitution of Mozambique and, given the need to protect and promote the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children, it was also a State party to many international and regional instruments.

81. Government institutions, civil society, partners, academia and other relevant stakeholders were fully involved in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child through various actions, including the provision of assistance to preschool-age children in children's centres and community schools and the implementation of vaccination programmes to prevent diseases in children, including COVID-19. While Mozambique had made significant progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, characterized by an improvement of indicators in the

areas of health, education, water and sanitation, further action was needed to increase children's access to basic services. Mozambique was committed to promoting and protecting the rights of children in furtherance of the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

82. **Mr. Lang** (United States of America) said that children and youth were facing unprecedented challenges. According to data from UNICEF, over 149 million children, or nearly one in five, were chronically malnourished, and undernutrition was linked to nearly half of all deaths of children under 5 years of age. Nutrition was vital to ensure that children grew, stayed healthy, developed and learned. The United States had recently announced \$2.9 billion in assistance, in addition to the nearly \$7 billion already committed to combat global food insecurity. No child should die of hunger.

83. His Government continued to stand firm in its conviction that every child should be safe and given the tools necessary to succeed, regardless of race, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics. Across the globe, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) children were suffering, often in silence. LGBTQI+ children were at greater risk for homelessness, suicide, depression, anxiety, abuse and substance use. Countries must work together to ensure that LGBTQI+ children everywhere were treated with the respect and dignity that they deserved.

84. Girls around the world also faced unique challenges due to the intersection of their age and gender. Over 11 million girls might never go back to school after the COVID-19 pandemic. Ten million girls were at risk of child, early and forced marriage during the subsequent decade and an additional 2 million cases of female genital mutilation and cutting could occur. That situation required urgent action.

85. The COVID-19 pandemic had also created new challenges for many children and youth. As children returned to in-person learning, some for the first time in more than two years, it was crucial to ensure they had the support they needed. The United States had recently announced \$300 million in mental health funding for schools so that students could receive the care they needed. The global community must work together to look after and work with the younger generations in order to leave them with a world in which everyone could take pride. There was no time to waste.

86. **Ms. Calem-Sangiorgio** (Monaco) said that armed conflicts, including the aggression against Ukraine, general insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic

continued to have a serious impact on children. Non-compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law also undermined their protection. As a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF, Monaco was able to look more closely at the action taken by the United Nations system. Her delegation welcomed the assistance provided by country teams on the ground and the collaborative work between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, including the publication of a guidance note on the abduction of children affected by conflict. Attacks on schools and hospitals continued to seriously undermine children's access and rights to education and health.

87. Education was the foundation for peace, tolerance, human rights and sustainable development. As had been seen at the Transforming Education Summit, education systems must be adapted to the challenges of the world of work of the future. To develop a strong economy and continue the post-pandemic recovery, youth needed to be educated, outward-looking and familiar with new technologies. With the Collège Numérique initiative, all secondary school students in Monaco had been equipped, since the start of the 2020 school year, with laptop computers with touch screens as well as electronic textbooks and software to facilitate learning. The Government would continue to implement the necessary measures to ensure the safety of children, particularly on the Internet, in the broader context of the digital transition.

88. Despite the right of children to be recognized from birth, 237 million children under the age of 5 did not have a birth certificate and 166 million were not registered with a civil registry. Without an identity, those "invisible" children were deprived of access to health, education and basic social services. An unregistered child was extremely vulnerable to trafficking and abuse of all kinds. The World Association of Children's Friends of Monaco was committed to changing public policies through its "civil status for all" programme, which aimed to raise awareness among the population and local communities of the importance and challenges of registration of birth, and to support local initiatives in favour of regulation. The Tech4Child Initiative also deployed technology in service of civil registration through the development of applications, investment in equipment for civil registration centres, the digitization of records and the centralization of data.

89. The UNICEF Children's Climate Risk Index indicated that 1 billion children were at extremely high risk of impact from the climate crisis. Climate laws and policies must be child-friendly and investment must be made in education on climate change and the

environment. Her delegation looked forward to the release of the general comment on children's rights and the environment by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and also welcomed the recent adoption of General Assembly resolution [76/300](#), which recognized the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Investing in youth also involved engaging and empowering children and young people and listening to them as protagonists of solutions to the climate crisis. Her delegation was confident that the United Nations Youth Office would play a guiding role in that task.

90. **Mr. Rashid** (Pakistan) said that while there were more children in schools around the world than ever before, millions of children of primary and lower secondary age remained out of school. Despite tougher global safeguards to protect children from violence and exploitation, they continued to remain vulnerable across the globe and their rights were often forgotten, disregarded or violated. Children were also often the victims most affected by situations of armed conflict, humanitarian crisis, foreign occupation and long-standing and unresolved disputes. From Palestine to Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, children continued to be caught in a quagmire of violence that was neither of their choosing nor of their making. They were victims of unimaginable horror every day. A veil of darkness had been imposed on the occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir following its illegal annexation on 5 August 2019. Unfortunately, disturbing and terrifying stories of widespread torture and arbitrary arrests continued to come to light. Thousands of people, including children, had been taken from their homes by occupation forces in the darkness of the night.

91. The annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict ([A/76/871-S/2022/493](#)) had verified 54 grave violations against 49 children in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to the report, a total of 33 boys were detained by Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir for their alleged association with armed groups or on national security grounds and a total of 34 children were killed and maimed by Indian security forces, including by the use of pellets by the Central Reserve Police Force.

92. Pakistan attached the highest priority to protecting and promoting the rights of children. The Government believed in investing in children as the key to development and prosperity. Pakistan had been one of the initiators of the World Summit for Children in 1990, which had led to adoption of the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child. Pakistan had also been one of the earliest signatories of the Convention and its Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child

prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and had also ratified all of the core conventions of the International Labour Organization relating to child labour. Furthermore, Pakistan had robust national and provincial legislation structures to protect and promote the rights of children. For example, in 2020 the Parliament had passed the historic Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Act, 2020, a progressive and action-oriented piece of legislation aimed at protecting and raising alerts whenever children went missing or were abducted.

93. The recent catastrophic floods in Pakistan had claimed the lives of more than 600 children. Every one of those deaths was a tragedy that could have been averted. The sad reality was that without a massive increase in support, many more children would lose their lives. The vital infrastructure that children relied on, including thousands of schools, water systems and health facilities, had been destroyed and damaged. Girls and boys in Pakistan were paying the price for a climate disaster not of their making.

94. His Government urged the international community to support local efforts to reopen schools in old and new temporary locations, set up health care services that included measures to prevent water-borne and communicable diseases and immunize children, and ensure food security by providing nutrition for children.

95. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Türkiye) said that the current state of the world was clearly not fit for children. Progress towards the majority of the Sustainable Development Goals was behind schedule and had been affected by the multifaceted impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and a multitude of protracted conflicts. The international community must display joint, robust political determination and take concerted action to address the situation of children in all settings, including conflicts and crises. Her delegation was deeply concerned by the number of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed against children, including in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria and Myanmar. Safeguarding and enhancing the well-being of children was a top human rights priority for Türkiye. It attached particular importance to the rights of the girl child.

96. At the international level, Türkiye was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, pursuant to which it had submitted combined fourth and fifth periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child ([CRC/C/TUR/4-5](#)). Türkiye had also ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual

Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the Convention on Contact concerning Children.

97. In the national context, significant steps had been taken in recent years to improve the legal and institutional framework. Children had been included among the groups that were provided special protection by the amendments to the Constitution made in 2010. The National Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, which was being implemented since 2017, set out comprehensive measures to eliminate child labour. With the understanding that giving children a voice was a precondition for effective child protection, committees on the rights of the child had been established in all provinces of Türkiye since 2010. All children between the ages of 12 and 18 could participate in the discussions held by those committees on all matters concerning them.

98. Large movements of migrants and refugees across borders had created further impediments to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. As the largest refugee-hosting country in the world, Türkiye had, on different occasions, shared with the international community its experience regarding children who had sought refuge in the country, and would continue those efforts in cooperation with UNICEF and other international partners to address their needs. Türkiye was committed, both nationally and internationally, to exerting every effort so that no child would be left behind.

99. **Ms. Pereira Gomes** (Brazil) said that as the world moved past the COVID-19 pandemic, Governments must ensure continuity in their efforts and focus on practical solutions to address the challenges posed by its secondary effects on children's well-being, development and protection, including their access to education, food, safety and health. Brazil was committed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in order to guarantee the full enjoyment of the rights of the child.

100. Brazil was fully committed to the advancement of the Children and Armed Conflict agenda, had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and had endorsed both the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers and the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups. Her Government had also supported initiatives on the ground, such as the promotion of the practice of capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art, as a tool to reintegrate former child soldiers in Haiti and in the

eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

101. In recognizing that children and youth were positive agents of change, States must be fully aware of their needs and interests to better address issues that affected their present and future. The Brazilian Government prioritized the development of policies that promoted and protected the rights of young people and fostered their participation in the formulation, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of policies that concerned them. In the context of the United Nations, Brazil had been actively engaged in the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office.

102. **Ms. Bonilla Alarcón** (Guatemala) said that her Government had recently approved Legislative Decree No. 19-2022, known as the "law against bullying", aimed at protecting the mental health of children, promoting healthy coexistence among students across the country and raising awareness about the impact of physical and psychological abuse on students. In addition, Guatemala had declared 2 May as the National Day Against School Bullying and Cyberbullying and had established the School Meals Act, which sought to eradicate chronic and acute malnutrition in the country, and the Act on the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents, approved by Decree No. 27/2003.

103. Given its geographical position, Guatemala was a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants and was highly vulnerable to human trafficking. The scourge of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, which particularly affected women, young people and children, was a cause of concern and had devastating consequences for the victims. Trafficking was a form of modern-day slavery and the international community must join efforts in combating it. Migrant children and minors in temporary migrant centres must be protected.

104. Her delegation was concerned about the threats and abuses committed against children in armed conflicts and the increase in civilian victims in that context, with children being directly affected. It therefore welcomed the proposal of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to develop a strategy that brought together existing initiatives on the issue and outlined the challenges faced by children. Given that education was essential in achieving progress, opportunities needed to be identified to support the continuation of education in the face of unprecedented challenges. Committed to protecting the rights of children in any situation, her Government supported the Safe Schools Declaration.

105. **Mr. Muhith** (Bangladesh) said that Bangladesh was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and, in 2013, had enacted a new law to give effect to the provisions of the Convention. The Government was working with the National Human Rights Commission to establish a separate Child Rights Commission. Child Welfare Boards had been also established and Child Day Care Centre Act of 2021 had been enacted for the safety of the children of working women. Furthermore, the Government had expanded the social safety net to cover more children, especially orphans, and was implementing family-based reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for destitute children. The Street Children Rehabilitation Programme, for example, had been undertaken for the overall well-being of street children.

106. Child marriage constituted a serious violation of children's human rights. The Government had pledged to eliminate child marriage entirely by 2041 and, in addition to enforcing the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 2017, was investing in the socioeconomic empowerment of women and girls as a means of preventing child marriage. Moreover, in order to eliminate violence against children, special laws had been put in place, including the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and Children, which was currently being implemented. A 24-hour toll-free child help line and a dedicated mobile app were in operation to provide free telephone services to children facing violence, abuse and exploitation. To ensure children's access to justice, separate tribunals and child-friendly desks had been established in police stations. Child victims were provided with free legal and reintegration services through a one-stop crisis centre, a national trauma counselling centre, and safe homes in every divisional city. The Government had pledged to eliminate all forms of child labour by 2025 and phased action plans had been in place to implement that pledge.

107. In the education sector, every effort was being made to recover from the learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Free textbooks were distributed to primary school students through book festivals on 1 January each year. In order to cope with the realities of life after the pandemic, the Government had developed the National Blended Education Master Plan (2022–2041), under which 60,000 multimedia classrooms would be set up by 2023. Increased global efforts were needed to reduce the digital divide and ensure access to digital learning by all children everywhere. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the Gateways to Public Digital Learning initiative launched by UNESCO and UNICEF during the Transforming Education Summit.

108. In Bangladesh, significant improvements had been made in the health of children, including in universal immunization. That had been possible because of the adoption of a more holistic and sector-wide approach. Health services provided through mobile phones and a 24-hour web portal were complementing the work of over 16,000 community and local health clinics all over the country. As many as 133,000 autistic children had been given therapeutic services provided by the Government.

109. **Ms. Ibrahim** (Brunei Darussalam) said that her Government had taken an inclusive and whole-of-nation approach to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. The national child protection framework, launched in December 2020 with the objective of strengthening social protection mechanisms for children, would serve as a guide in setting strategies to advocate for the well-being and development of children, while striving to ensure that every child would grow up in a safe, loving and nurturing environment, enabling them to achieve their fullest potential. In October 2019 a toll-free, anonymous child helpline had been established to further protect the well-being and welfare of children in the country. It provided a platform for the public to immediately report on issues affecting children so that they could be addressed promptly. The Orphans Scholarship Programme established in 2022 would also help meet the educational needs of vulnerable children and ensure that they were not left behind.

110. During the pandemic, the Government had seen a surge in volunteerism and community advocacy. In that regard, a dedicated app had been launched in August 2021 as a platform for volunteers to participate in community activities. Another significant reform was the introduction of the National Youth Policy and Strategy 2020–2035, which was intended to ensure the continued relevance of youth development initiatives.

111. **Ms. Namgyel** (Bhutan) said that Bhutan had drawn on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Royal Edict on Education Reform issued in December 2020 was a testament to the importance of education in the process of nation-building and to a new vision and road map for education into the twenty-first century. That would be achieved by improving digital literacy in schools, including by introducing coding across the curriculum, training teachers and increasing access to information and communications technology tools. The Bhutan Baccalaureate, an education model for lifelong learning developed was currently being piloted in 22 schools and the new national school curriculum marked a paradigm shift from an academic-based “factory model” of education to a “humanism model”

that emphasized the discovery of an individual's innate potential. Greater emphasis had also been placed on technical and vocational education and training to equip children with the necessary skills.

112. The Government had always prioritized investing in human capital and upholding the rights of its citizens. Education was a core fundamental human right and served as a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights. It provided the foundation for many people to achieve full employment and poverty eradication. Furthermore, legal frameworks were in place to ensure the rights of children. In addition to the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, relevant national legislation enacted included the Child Care and Protection Act, the Child Adoption Act and the Domestic Violence Prevention Act. Standard operating procedures for the implementation of laws also existed to ensure the protection of all children. A national child policy, currently in draft form, would, upon implementation, ensure a systematic and coordinated approach to adequately respond to children's needs and to make them feel valued, cared for and supported.

113. It was critical to address the triple environmental crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. Irreversible change to the natural world and how humanity benefited from it must be avoided, otherwise intergenerational equity would be derailed. The recent recognition by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council of a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right for all was encouraging, as a future without a clean and healthy environment was no future at all.

114. **Ms. Gashu** (Japan) said that her Government had enacted the 2022 Basic Act on Child Policies, which was based on the core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it would establish a new Children and Families Agency by April 2023. The Government was adopting comprehensive measures to create a society where all children could grow up in good health, regardless of their economic backgrounds, and pursue their dreams. It was also dedicated to taking measures to prevent violence against children and to promote their rights, including through the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

115. Her delegation commended the outcome of the Transforming Education Summit in response to the global crisis in education. The momentum raised during the Summit needed to be maintained to ensure inclusive and equitable educational opportunities for all children and youth affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and other crises. The Prime Minister of Japan

had announced that he would take a prominent role in further strengthening ongoing efforts in the education sector. Japan supported education around the world and would provide \$1.5 billion in international cooperation aid in the education sector over the subsequent five years.

116. Lastly, as access to health care was a crucial component of protecting the rights of children, her Government had also recently announced a contribution of 1.36 billion yen to UNICEF to support digital health systems to manage vaccine information for infectious disease control in seven countries in Africa: Benin, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, the Republic of South Sudan, Tunisia and Uganda.

117. **Ms. Titikpina Boukari** (Togo) said that her delegation applauded the efforts of the Secretary-General in organizing the Transforming Education Summit, which had led to innovative solutions and a programme to overhaul the education system, which had become more fragile because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Her Government was determined to continue its efforts to promote children's rights by implementing the relevant recommendations arising from the Summit.

118. At the national level, Togo had adopted high-priority projects to strengthen inclusion and social harmony and guarantee peace, particularly for the benefit of children, including training provided to teachers at several centres in Togo with the support of the International Bureau for Children's Rights. New school infrastructure was also being built in rural areas of Togo. However, a profound disparity remained in terms of access to education since 39 per cent of school-age girls were not enrolled in school, compared to 15 per cent of boys. The Government had therefore conducted awareness campaigns to encourage parents to relieve their female children of the burden of domestic chores. Teachers had also been made aware of the dangers of stereotypes in education.

119. On the issue of public health, Togo had made great progress since 2010, particularly in reducing new infections and deaths of children in the context of the fight against the AIDS virus.

120. **Ms. Lichtschlag** (Germany), speaking as youth delegate, said that it had been said many times that children and youth were the future, but they also represented the present and deserved to be heard accordingly. Children and young people, especially girls and young women, had been disproportionately affected by multiple crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, war and violent conflicts.

121. International Youth Day, falling on 12 August in 2022, had been held under the theme of intergenerational solidarity. During the pandemic, children and young people had been asked repeatedly to act in solidarity with the older generations, to protect their health and lighten the burden on health-care systems. In response, children and youth had done as much as they could to minimize their social circles, thereby missing out on crucial experiences, such as playing with other children, pursuing sports and hobbies and engaging in volunteer activities as well as certain formats of non-formal education. Schools and universities had also moved their teaching online, which had essentially confined children and youth within the walls of their homes. There had been reports of rises in domestic violence and abuse. The pandemic years had taken a huge toll on the mental health of children and young people. The needs of youth could not be postponed to some later date. Therefore, when Government were enacting plans to build back better, children and youth should be put first. Adults and older generations should act in solidarity with young people and respect and enable the full range of their rights, especially pursuant to article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

122. The impacts of human-made climate change affected everyone, and disproportionately the countries of the global South. Governments and institutions should act in generational and international solidarity and respect the promises made to young people and to the unborn generations, especially the pledge to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

123. While it was important to protect children and youth, especially those in war and conflict zones and on the move, they should not be seen only as needing protection, but also as valuable participants in solutions to issues that affected them and future generations. Children and young people were often a subject of debate rather than active participants in it, thus they were denied the possibility to make their views known. They had agency, capability and expertise and the older generations needed to free up more seats at the table and allow for transparent and participatory decision-making. To that end, the General Assembly resolution on the creation of the United Nations Youth Office was most welcome. However, a wide range of young people from diverse backgrounds across the world must be included in its establishment, through a meaningful consultation process led by the United Nations. Only then could that new body work in the best interests of the group that it was supposed to represent.

124. **Ms. Islamuly** (Kazakhstan) said that Kazakhstan was undergoing structural reforms and political transformation and overhauling the architecture of

public governance. One result of that process was significant and long-lasting changes in the protection of the rights of children and their well-being. The Government prioritized measures aimed at strengthening support for children and their families, with a special focus on the girl child. In that regard, 2022 had been declared The Year of Children and a new national fund for children would be established on 1 January 2024 to support their housing and education.

125. To ensure better protection of the rights of the child, the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights had been operating in Kazakhstan since 2016 to prioritize the rights of children deprived of parental care, children with special needs and children from large and low-income families. Furthermore, with the support of UNICEF, a project was under way to map the capacity of Kazakhstan in order to respond to the needs of children affected by migration processes, with a focus on unaccompanied and separated children, and a national child well-being index had been implemented that consisted of 48 indicators grouped into four domains: child, family and society, public policy, and welfare of the country.

126. The Government was implementing a national project on high-quality and affordable health care for every citizen. The project aimed to increase the affordability and quality of medical care, including all necessary measures with respect to adolescent reproductive health, and increase the overall well-being of the population, especially youth. Another important initiative was a national project intended to reduce gaps in the quality of education between urban and rural schools, increase the number of educational facilities and create a safe and comfortable learning environment, particularly for girls. Future plans included accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.