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Chair: Mr. Marschik (Austria)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 24: Social development (continued)
(A/78/236)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (continued) (A/78/211)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family (continued) (A/78/134, A/78/187, A/78/188, A/78/189, A/78/157 and A/78/331)

1. **Ms. Perdomo** (Chile) said that her delegation was concerned about the social development trends described in the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/78/211). The global pace of progress was such that Sustainable Development Goal 1 would not be met by 2030, when close to 600 million people were expected to face hunger. Limited access to decent, formal jobs also widened inequalities, which were further exacerbated by crises that were thrusting millions of people into precarious situations. Women, children, elderly persons, young people, migrants, persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples were disproportionately affected. Growing unmet needs and gaps in basic services necessitated urgent action, especially in view of ecological transformation, population ageing, increased migration and rapid urbanisation.

2. Social protection systems needed to be resilient and adaptable while staying true to commitments relating to gender equality and human rights. Such systems would enhance people's resilience in the face of crises and ensure basic income over people's lifetimes, thus improving well-being and quality of life. Slowing progress since 2015 and reversals since 2020 served as a reminder that progress remained fragile and unequal. The root causes of poverty addressed in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development remained a challenge for States.

3. After a global pandemic and in the face of a climate crisis, the framework for development advanced in the Copenhagen Declaration retained its relevance, and States should focus on the goals of poverty eradication, decent jobs, decent housing, lifelong learning and social protection. To that end, Chile supported the proposal to hold a world social summit in 2025.

4. **Ms. Pierre Fabre** (Haiti) said that, despite the social development commitments undertaken and the related Goals, social progress and an improved quality of life remained challenges for numerous countries, particularly the least developed countries.

5. Haiti faced numerous challenges, and social and economic development remained stunted owing to political insecurity, growing and unprecedented violence and exacerbated fragility. Its gross national income per capita was the lowest in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in 2021 it had ranked 163rd out of 191 countries on the Human Development Index. A large majority of the population was exposed to natural hazards such as hurricanes, flooding and earthquakes.

6. With limited means, the Government was cognizant of its responsibility for social development to ensure a better quality of life and well-being for all Haitians. Setting a national social assistance strategy that included free, universal and mandatory schooling, the promotion of small-scale farming, measures to support rural women entrepreneurs and mechanisms to combat food insecurity would prove key. A multisectoral programme had been launched for vulnerable groups, including a programme to subsidize transport for certain social groups.

7. **Mr. Vongnorkeo** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the international community was at a critical juncture in the face of wide-ranging challenges to development gains, the Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to secure fundamental rights for all. Effective, transformative solutions were needed to overcome those challenges and leave no one behind.

8. The commitment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to social development was reflected in its social and economic development plan for 2021–2025. Tangible progress had been made in education through, inter alia, a digitalization programme, additional classrooms, psychological support for teachers, and health protection measures. The Government gave high priority to education so as to improve the human capital index and, to that end, it had increased the relevant budget allocation, seeking to strengthen education quality and create enabling conditions for education for all, particularly women and girls.

9. In public health, tangible progress towards the provision of health care for all included reduced maternal mortality and increased access to rights-based family planning. His country had achieved the largest reduction in maternal mortality in the region.

10. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Lao People's Democratic

Republic sought to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities by enacting laws and adopting an action plan. It was also implementing the recommendations made by the experts of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities following their review of the national plan in August 2022.

11. He called for increased international support and assistance to address the remaining challenges, including the development gap between rural and urban areas, poverty eradication and technological transfer.

12. **Monsignor Murphy** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the social dimension of development was perhaps the most human of the three dimensions. As neighbours, people should act in a spirit of brotherhood to foster conditions for integral human development, starting with the eradication of poverty, while respecting diverse values, contexts and priorities. Grounded on the intrinsic and God-given dignity of every person, integral human development also required caring for each person's social, spiritual and cultural well-being. To do so, all persons must recognise their common humanity, which lay at the heart of equality.

13. The family was of utmost importance to society and, therefore, entitled to protection from society and the State. It was the provider of people's first experiences of generosity, compassion and love. Families often provided the only support for persons in vulnerable situations and social protection systems should therefore focus on the family, particularly on the role played by mothers and fathers in children's well-being.

14. Access to education was also essential, to prepare children to become responsible members of society. Education programmes should support parents while prioritizing universal literacy and numeracy, with opportunities to catch up on lost learning. Skills training was also important, both for young people as a way to enter the workforce and for older persons as a way to move into new fields.

15. Beyond contributing time and talent to society and providing a sense of purpose and self-respect, work framed within a just economic system also enabled people to support themselves. It was essential to address youth unemployment, informal employment and a lack of labour rights.

16. Prioritizing economic profit over the individual and over humanity led to a throw-away culture, in which humans were reduced to the value of what they produced. In that culture, the poor, persons with disabilities, the unborn and elderly persons were considered not useful or no longer needed. Putting solidarity into practice, particularly with regard to the

most vulnerable, was the only way to achieve true social development.

17. **Ms. Pichardo Urbina** (Nicaragua) said that Nicaragua supported policies to restore the economic, social and cultural rights of its peoples in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Illegal, unfair and corrosive, unilateral coercive measures hampered all efforts to achieve those Goals.

18. Focused on reducing poverty and inequality, improving living conditions, creating jobs, fostering investment and protecting natural resources, the Sandinista development model encouraged families and communities to seize their own destiny in order to overcome poverty and break free from the vicious cycle of the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

19. Free, quality health care was a priority, and Nicaragua had the best free, public hospital system in Central America. From 2007 to 2022, many health care centres had been improved, the number of beds had increased and all municipalities had been outfitted with at least one maternal care centre.

20. The Government of Reconciliation and National Unity had been making in-person visits to communities to recognize the political, economic, social and cultural rights of women, families, children, adolescents, young people, elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

21. Free and inclusive education had been provided at all levels so as to care for and protect families. As part of a culture of respect for persons with disabilities, a law had been enacted to recognise their rights and ensure their access to jobs and education. Elderly persons benefited from comprehensive care centres, subsidized electricity and water utilities and concessionary prices for access to tourist areas. Young people also played a central role in all social, cultural, educational and environmental programs.

22. **Mr. Al-Khaqani** (Iraq) said that Iraq placed great emphasis on human rights and, in particular, on social development. Iraq had been one of the first signatories to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and it remained committed to the principles and purposes enshrined therein.

23. The world was facing considerable challenges, including food crises and insecurity, climate change, resource scarcity and the repercussions of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In response to those challenges, Iraq was working to address their root causes, which included corruption, discrimination, a lack of respect for religion, extreme poverty, unemployment and a shortage of quality education.

24. At the national level, the Government had launched an ambitious programme that prioritized sustainable development. It had adopted a law affording expanded social protection to workers in the private and cooperative sectors, a national development plan for the period 2023–2027 and the third national poverty reduction plan.

25. It was important to protect the family as the basis for society, in accordance with article 23 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Family cohesion would lead to social cohesion and to inclusive development. The Government had established a supreme high council for young people and had launched an initiative to invest in their talents and prepare them for the labour market. Iraq aspired to constructive regional and international cooperation to achieve social development.

26. **Mr. Rojas** (Peru) said that the COVID-19 pandemic, climate-related disasters, political and economic instability and other crises had eroded States' capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda. Once again, the greatest impact had been felt by the most vulnerable persons and groups, since many poverty-reduction programmes had been curtailed or interrupted in low- and middle-income countries during the public health emergency. That fact, coupled with the loss of income and increase in food and energy prices, had led to the largest rise in global poverty and inequality since the Second World War. With respect to the Sustainable Development Goals, there was a moderate or severe lack of progress towards around half of the targets; for approximately 30 per cent of the targets, the situation remained unchanged or had even deteriorated since 2015. Should such trends continue, only one third of countries would succeed in halving national poverty levels by 2030.

27. Social exclusion prevented certain groups from accessing resources, goods and services and limited their ability to benefit from paid work and economic opportunities. Persons with disabilities, for example, struggled to cover basic necessities such as housing, food and drinking water, while exclusion from employment and education hampered their ability to pay for medical care and posed a risk to their health. To achieve social inclusion, it was vital to address multidimensional poverty and understand how it affected vulnerable groups. Peru had adopted a national development and social inclusion policy for 2030 to assist persons living in or at risk of living in poverty at any life stage, with a particular focus on human rights and human development. The new policy sought to address poverty as a multidimensional issue and included intersectoral and intergovernmental action on

health care, education, housing, road connectivity, economic inclusion and justice.

28. **Ms. Dabo N'diaye** (Mali) said that social development was a fundamental pillar of sustainable development. Mali had ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and its Constitution afforded fundamental rights to citizens, such as the right to education, training, work, housing and health. Under article 11, education was mandatory, secular and free, while private education was also available.

29. To complement the legislation, the Government had enacted a number of social protection measures, including a 10-year plan for education adopted in 2019 to improve the educational system, bolster the capacity of teaching personnel, promote equitable and inclusive access to quality education, and enhance the governance and resilience of the sector. As a result, the school enrolment rate, especially for girls, had increased. Efforts had been made to ameliorate health outcomes by establishing school canteens, and reforms had been introduced to improve the quality of technical and professional training. Unfortunately, security crises in the country had undermined that work and led to the closure of thousands of schools.

30. The Government was aiming to ensure access to health care for all Malians through the universal health insurance system. It was also strengthening the social safety net through cash payments to vulnerable households, as well as programmes to assist persons living in poverty, women, children, persons with disabilities and displaced persons. Programmes were also in place to ensure access to decent housing, foster food security and improve the quality of human capital, and the Government had committed to increasing the budget allocated for access to drinking water, hygiene and sanitation.

31. Mali thanked its bilateral and multilateral partners for their support as the country returned to stability. It stood ready and willing to cooperate with partners that respected its sovereignty and strategic goals.

32. **Ms. Schönborg** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that challenges such as the rise in extreme poverty rates, food insecurity and a lack of access to quality education, energy and employment were complex and deeply entrenched but not insurmountable. The Sovereign Order of Malta upheld the principles of compassion, altruism and justice, and through its humanitarian agency Malteser International, was focusing on emergency relief, sustainable development and health care. It also employed a multifaceted approach to poverty, empowering

communities with the tools and knowledge needed for self-sufficiency.

33. The Sovereign Order of Malta had livelihood programmes and entrepreneurship initiatives in place to help individuals break free from poverty and was taking resolute action on food insecurity. It was working tirelessly to provide emergency food aid, improve agricultural practices and promote sustainable food systems.

34. As access to a quality education was a fundamental right, the Sovereign Order of Malta was actively engaged in constructing schools, supporting educational initiatives and providing scholarships. It was also contributing to a sustainable and equitable energy future for all by implementing sustainable energy solutions in underserved regions, supporting communities and leveraging renewable energy technology to drive economic growth.

35. Lastly, the Sovereign Order of Malta had targeted interventions to address unemployment. It supported vocational training programmes and job creation initiatives and was endeavouring to reduce unemployment rates and enable individuals to make a meaningful contribution to society.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.