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Chair: Mr. Marschik (Austria)

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

Organization of work (A/C.3/78/1; A/C.3/78/L.1 and A/C.3/78/L.1/Add.1)

1. **The Chair** said that the organization of work of the Committee was contained in documents A/C.3/78/L.1 and A/C.3/78/L.1/Add.1, and the note by the Secretariat concerning the allocation of agenda items was contained in document A/C.3/78/1.

2. He recalled the guidelines concerning the conduct of the Committee's work that were set out in chapter II of the report of the General Committee (A/78/250) and drew the attention of the Committee to paragraph 17 of that report, on the need, reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its resolution 77/335, to continue to improve the working methods of the Main Committees. In that connection, the Assembly had invited each Main Committee to further discuss its working methods, as appropriate, and to submit to the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the Assembly during the seventy-eighth session a written update on progress achieved in the efforts aimed at improving the working methods of the Committees. He also drew attention to paragraph 18 of that report on the necessity, stressed by the Assembly in resolution 77/335, of aligning the agendas of the Assembly and its Main Committees to examine, on a case-by-case basis, all the resolutions and agenda items that focused on the same area, based on their purpose, relevance and content, in line with Assembly resolution 75/325. In addition, he drew the attention of the Committee to paragraphs 69 to 84 of the report, on questions relating to the programme budget.

3. He took it that the Committee agreed to those recommendations.

4. *It was so decided.*

5. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to extend invitations to the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council and other experts whose titles were included in document A/C.3/78/CRP.1 to submit their reports to and interact with the Committee.

6. *It was so decided.*

7. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to approve the organization of work, as contained in document A/C.3/78/L.1, subject to amendment.

8. *It was so decided.*

9. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to take note of the status of documentation for

the session as contained in document A/C.3/78/L.1/Add.1.

10. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 24: Social development (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 (A/78/211)**

(b) **Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family (A/78/61E-E/2023/7, A/78/134, A/78/187, A/78/188, A/78/189, A/78/157, A/78/226 and A/78/331)**

11. **Mr. Li Junhua** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that world leaders had gathered at United Nations Headquarters in the previous week to take stock of progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, rally behind development financing reform, address pandemic preparedness and health care and raise the level of collective climate ambition. The need to focus on people's well-being, dignity and collective resilience had remained a core theme. While Member States had made clear that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remained the best framework for a greener and inclusive world, the approach to its implementation had thus far led to slow and fragile gains. Only about 15 per cent of the Goal targets were on track. Action should be taken on holistic, cross-sectoral approaches and appropriate emphasis should be placed on the greater public good. A people-centred approach to development could help to inform that path.

12. During the current session, the Committee was expected to consider more than 50 draft resolutions in the areas of, inter alia, gender equality, youth policies, humanitarian assistance, the rights of persons with disabilities, older persons and Indigenous Peoples. The Committee's decisions could help to guide policymaking that recognized human rights and social development as both means and ends. The Committee could help to ensure that clear links were made between a green economy and sustainable social development and could also highlight how laws that respected the rights of Indigenous Peoples could accelerate climate ambitions and preserve biodiversity.

13. The Committee's areas of expertise would be addressed as cross-cutting issues at the upcoming Summit of the Future. The Secretariat would also look to the Committee for guidance on the proposed

convening of a world social summit in 2025 to elaborate an action plan on social development for the twenty-first century.

14. **Mr. Williams** (Director, New York Office, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on inclusive policies and programmes to address homelessness (A/78/236), said that the report, the first of its kind in the history of the United Nations, contained a review of the progress made and the gaps and challenges remaining in social development policies and programmes to address homelessness. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was highlighted, as it had deepened existing inequalities, and created new vulnerabilities. The topics addressed included precarious and substandard housing; evictions among low-income populations; discrimination against homeless people; the role of local governments in providing solutions; and the importance of including persons experiencing homelessness in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies to end homelessness.

15. The report recommended the formulation of a broad definition of homelessness in order to enable Member States to establish baselines, measure progress, assess the effectiveness of policies and effectively channel limited public investment. A definition of homelessness would also provide a basis for comparative analysis across rural areas, cities, countries and regions.

16. The report also recommended that local and national governments adopt policies that addressed the conditions that gave rise to homelessness, such as poor housing and inadequate services to address mental illness, social stigma and discriminatory enforcement of laws. Governments should prioritize homelessness within their social protection systems and introduce housing policies that ensured an adequate and affordable housing supply. Strategies and participatory planning practices should be implemented to transform informal settlements and slums. Intergovernmental platforms, such as the intergovernmental working group on housing, should be utilized to advance the recommendations of the report.

17. Before joining UN-Habitat, he had worked in homeless shelters and understood the complexities of the issue. Homelessness was not merely a question of housing supply, but was also connected to matters of drug addiction, mental health and a lack of basic services. Persons experiencing homelessness must be the backbone of any solution to the problem.

18. **Ms. Lula** (Poland) said that the links between homelessness, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights, including the right to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, were highlighted in the ground-breaking report of the Secretary-General. As host of the World Urban Forum in 2022 and a co-chair of the Group of Friends of UN-Habitat, Sustainable Urbanization and the New Urban Agenda, Poland was deeply committed to ensuring safe and dignified housing for all.

19. Homelessness, which was a violation of human rights and a marker of poverty and exclusion, affected developed and developing nations alike. Poland had implemented measures to combat homelessness through its social protection system, which provided shelter, meals and clothing to those in need and prioritized homelessness exit plans for affected persons.

20. Of the 108 million people reported at the end of 2022 as forcibly displaced from their homes, 1.6 million were Ukrainians who had taken refuge in Poland after the outbreak of the Russian war of aggression in February 2022. Private individuals, volunteers and non-governmental organizations had raised funds and offered free accommodation and transport to the refugees. Within 17 days of the onset of the war, the Government had enacted an emergency law that granted Ukrainians access to the Polish labour market and to the same social benefits enjoyed by permanent residents. Presently, more than 70 per cent of Ukrainian refugees in Poland had secured employment, and 60 per cent had found independent accommodations. She asked the Director to elaborate on the benefits of a human rights-based approach to homelessness and to provide examples of successful practices in that regard.

21. **Mr. Williams** (Director, New York Office, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) said that Member States had shown interest in a deeper exploration of the issues of definition, policy and cooperation with global platforms, and he hoped that the Committee would continue its consideration of the report.

22. The most successful homelessness strategies were local. Homelessness was a complex issue and manifested in different ways in different localities. While national Governments had a critical role to play in addressing homelessness, local governments were even more critical, given their proximity to the front lines. Local authorities must apply strategies to constructively address the problem in a way that balanced the various services needed with the human rights components of dignity, respect and non-discrimination.

23. **Mr. Wilmoth** (Acting Director, Division for Inclusive Social Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that he would be introducing a note by the Secretariat and seven reports of the Secretary-General. According to the report of the Secretary-General on the 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), despite marked progress since 1995, advances made towards achieving the objectives of the World Summit had decelerated or even reversed since 2015, serving as a reminder that progress remained fragile and uneven. Member States were called upon to convene a world social summit in 2025 and to design policies that promoted decent work and social progress through more equitable revenue collection and a reallocation of public spending.

24. The findings set out in the note by the Secretariat (A/78/157) on the *World Social Report 2023: Leaving No One Behind in an Ageing World* showed that global population ageing brought both challenges and opportunities as countries strived to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The path and consequences of that largely irreversible trend could be shaped by actions and policies to promote labour market participation and increased productivity, uphold lifelong good health, prevent poverty, reduce inequality and promote economic security in an equitable and fiscally sustainable manner. In his report entitled “Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing” (A/78/134), the Secretary-General highlighted key issues and challenges affecting the full and effective inclusion of older persons in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, stressing that population ageing was a consequence of successful development. Greater representation in the broader development discourse was therefore required to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and leave no one behind.

25. In his report on promoting social integration through social inclusion (A/78/188), the Secretary-General highlighted the role of social inclusion and integration in combating multidimensional poverty and promoting sustainable development, especially for marginalized groups. Recommendations included the use of policies and programmes to eradicate poverty and address the situation and needs of members of such groups, who experienced multiple forms of disadvantage with cumulative and synergistic impacts. In his report on cooperatives in social development (A/78/187), the Secretary-General noted that building up cooperatives as profitable enterprises promoted sustainable development and empowered many people

living in poverty or vulnerable situations. Important elements for creating a conducive business environment included strengthened legal and regulatory frameworks, affordable financing, transport and communication infrastructure and an internationally comparable methodology for capturing and reporting statistics on operations.

26. The report of the Secretary-General on policies and programmes involving youth (A/78/189) provided an overview of the progress achieved in implementing resolution 76/137, with a focus on intergenerational solidarity and partnerships, food security and sustainable consumption and inclusive development through sport, culture and recreation, all in the context of building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretary-General recommended strengthening youth-centred policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. In his report on the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (A/78/61-E/2023/7), the Secretary-General described the status of preparations for the observance of the anniversary. He recommended investing in sustainable urbanization through the provision of adequate infrastructure, accessible transportation, affordable housing and intergenerational living arrangements and supporting research, awareness-raising activities and policy actions on the roles and impact of current megatrends on families. Lastly, in his report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto (A/78/331), the Secretary-General recommended the adoption and implementation of laws and policies to protect the safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and in emergencies and increased investment in accessibility for all and in consultations with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. He also recommended raising awareness of easy-to-understand communication and allocating funding and human resources to expanding its use.

27. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco), said that the decade of action and delivery had begun with a global pandemic that continued to affect lives and livelihoods, especially in developing countries. The subsequent health crisis had become a human and socioeconomic crisis impeding progress towards the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, additional human-made and climate-related vulnerabilities had had a disproportionate impact on persons in special or vulnerable situations. Efforts made by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to inspire new policies and investments in Goal implementation were welcome, and its work aimed at boosting sustainable development

achievements despite numerous challenges were appreciated. Strengthening trust, social cohesion, intergenerational solidarity and partnerships was key, while more efforts were needed to mobilize financing, enhance national implementation and strengthen institutions to achieve the Goals by 2030. Given the critical relationship between human rights and sustainable development and the increasingly apparent need for collective accelerated action to realize the Goals, greater investment in strong institutions and the rule of law in the service of sustainable development was of the utmost importance.

28. **Ms. Mahler** (Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons), introducing her report (A/78/226), said that climate change resulted in more – and more extreme – weather events and disasters that disproportionately affected people in the most vulnerable situations, with older persons, particularly those experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, facing greater negative impacts on their human rights. Physical, political, economic and social factors, including age-related discrimination, further exacerbated the impact of such emergencies on older persons, who tended to be left behind.

29. The growing challenge of climate-induced disasters for the human rights of older persons required urgent action from States, United Nations agencies, civil society and all relevant stakeholders to ensure appropriate and age-responsive disaster preparedness, response and recovery, as well as climate mitigation and adaptation. While the Paris Agreement on climate change and the acknowledgement of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment established a link between human rights and climate change, dedicated legal protection for the rights of older persons in the international human rights framework was fragmented and inconsistent. Nevertheless, the relationship between climate change, disaster risk reduction and the human rights of older persons had received some recognition in non-binding policy documents and regional legal frameworks.

30. It was imperative to consider the human rights of older persons before, during and after a climate change-induced disaster. Measures to build community resilience and combat isolation and exclusion were important, but could lead to an overreliance by States on communities and civil society organizations. It was the State's responsibility to protect older populations' human rights, including through social and economic protection systems, adapted housing solutions, steady and accessible health services and effective systems for communicating disaster-related information. Effective

laws, policies and plans for disaster prevention and preparedness were essential to preventing and mitigating harm caused by often unexpected or unpredictable disasters with unknown consequences. It was also necessary to have well-designed and age-sensitive policies and plans to respond to disasters as they occurred, to avoid discrimination and inappropriate service delivery through a lack of understanding of the particular needs of older persons. Older persons, including those living in long-term care facilities, must be prioritized in evacuation efforts.

31. The means of delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid must also be accessible and non-discriminatory, while health care should be accessible, age-responsive and comprehensive. Challenges disproportionately faced by older persons in the aftermath of a climate-related disaster included migration and displacement, a lack of adequate housing, financial obstacles and economic insecurity. States should facilitate post-disaster access to recovery-related aid, loans and schemes, support for economic activities and access to pensions. Older persons must also be granted opportunities to use their past experiences to meaningfully participate in all facets of disaster preparedness, response and recovery, as well as in climate adaptation.

32. As the fastest-growing age group worldwide, older persons and their rights must become a priority for all Governments, especially given the planet-wide climate change crisis. The adoption of an international legally binding instrument on the human rights of older persons would offer the best protection for those rights, including in the context of climate-induced disasters.

33. **Mr. Shaked** (Israel), expressing condolences for the lives lost as a result of the recent harsh weather conditions said that his country was strongly committed to the protection of the rights of older persons. Among efforts launched by Israel to protect its population in times of emergency were awareness-raising campaigns by the Ministry of Health, with specific guidelines for ensuring the welfare of older persons and their families. Given the Independent Expert's assertion that effective systems for communicating disaster-related information were essential to preparedness, combined with the prevalent lack of connectivity and digital literacy among older persons, he enquired about the most effective measures to reach older persons with critical messaging in times of climate-related crisis.

34. **Ms. Squeff** (Argentina) said that one of the important points raised by the Independent Expert with regard to climate-related disaster preparedness, response and recovery was that the current international

human rights framework provided insufficient protection for the rights of older persons in the context of climate-induced disasters. Her delegation agreed that States should adopt a new international legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons to fill protection gaps in that context. It also concurred that older persons, in particular older women and older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, were often at greater economic disadvantage and thus more exposed to the risks associated with climate change-related disasters. She asked how such an instrument should provide for the participation of older people in decision-making processes on climate change-related adaptation and mitigation capacities, so as to take full advantage of their knowledge and experience. She wondered what specific actions States could take to involve older people in general, and older women and older LGBTI people in particular, in decision-making processes.

35. **Mr. Malovrh** (Slovenia), said that individuals in vulnerable situations were often more affected than others by the impacts of climate change and that extreme weather conditions made it more difficult for older persons to cover their basic living needs, especially in more exposed areas. His country was still coping with the consequences of devastating floods experienced in August 2023, and from forest fires in 2022. Slovenia agreed with the Independent Expert's findings that older persons and/or their representative organizations must be given meaningful opportunities to participate in all facets of disaster preparedness, response and recovery, as many had experiences, knowledge and skills that could contribute to climate action. He enquired about the best way to implement gender- and age-sensitive disaster-risk reduction policies, including by taking into account the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

36. **Mr. González Behmaras** (Cuba) said that his country shared the goal of protecting older adults, with ageing one of its main sociodemographic challenges. Given estimates that, by 2035, more than 30 per cent of the Cuban population would be aged 60 years or over, ensuring that people could age with dignity and in full enjoyment of their rights was a priority for his Government. In its Constitution and its 2022 Family Code, his country had strengthened recognition of those rights, guarantees for their enjoyment and the State's and society's responsibilities to ensure them. He requested the Independent Expert's opinion on the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the life and enjoyment of rights of older people in countries where those measures were applied.

37. **Ms. De Gabriele** (Malta), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the report of the Independent Expert came at a pivotal moment characterized by an escalation in climate change-induced disasters. Her delegation concurred that legislation and policies concerning climate change-induced disaster preparedness, response and recovery should be age-sensitive and gender-responsive and that measures must be specifically tailored to the unique and diverse needs and conditions of older persons. Policies should incorporate best practices for disaster-risk reduction, as well as climate mitigation and adaptation, including early warning systems, and needed to be flexible to accommodate various types of climate-related disasters. States should facilitate and promote efforts by local communities and civil society organizations to support older persons before, during and after such disasters. An age-responsive approach to emergencies necessitated meaningful opportunities for older persons to participate in all stages of disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Their voices should be amplified in data collection, law and policy formulation and decision-making processes. Her delegation acknowledged in particular the vital role of older women in building capacity for climate change mitigation and disaster risk reduction.

38. **Ms. González López** (El Salvador), said that her country agreed with the call to view the rights of older persons as a priority at the United Nations. The Independent Expert had clearly set out in her report the effects of climate change and its impact on older people, had stressed that those effects put older people at high risk, with reduced access to water and foodstuffs in turn aggravating morbidity and mortality risks, and had highlighted climate change as a global challenge with no generational or geographical boundaries. With regard to the issues raised and the need to take older people's needs into account in planning, Member States must view older persons as more than people who needed support and assistance and involve them in the formulation of policy and programmes. She enquired as to how to effectively involve older persons to ensure they had a voice and a vote in the formulation of Member State policies.

39. **Mr. Grünwald** (Slovakia) said that his delegation welcomed the Independent Expert's focus on the rights of older persons in the context of climate change-induced disasters as the pressing issue faced by the international community today. The consequences of climate change had a detrimental effect on older persons, for whom climate change-related impacts included decreased well-being and quality of life and significantly higher mortality risks due to extreme

weather, as well as negative impacts on physical and mental health. Older persons with disabilities, and older women in particular, were among those most affected by the climate crisis and its consequences. Having taken note of recent remarks by the Secretary-General regarding the climate crisis, his delegation wondered what short-term measures the international community must urgently adopt to mitigate the negative consequences on older persons.

40. **Ms. Narváez Ojeda** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons, said that, as indicated by the Independent Expert, two thirds of older persons worldwide were living in low- and middle-income countries that faced a higher risk of climate-related disasters. Older persons were more likely to die from climate-related disasters, largely as a result of factors that Member States could improve. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 included provisions on disaggregated data and recognition for the role of older persons' knowledge, skills and wisdom in designing policies, plans and mechanisms for disaster risk reduction. The Paris Agreement contained references to parties' obligations to respect, promote and consider human rights when taking action to address climate change. She asked how an international legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons could complement existing frameworks on climate change and disaster risk reduction and how a normative framework would strengthen institutions to provide better protection for the rights of older persons in the context of climate change and disasters.

41. **Ms. Hardwick** (Austria) said that the Independent Expert had mentioned in her report that the relationship between climate change, disaster risk reduction and the human rights of older persons had already received recognition in non-binding policy documents. With the "climate breakdown" having already begun, as the Secretary-General had warned, the consequences thereof imposed challenges on people of all age groups. Although young people shared a particular burden in facing future escalations of climate change, older persons suffered the most from the immediate impacts. Record-breaking heatwaves led to more deaths every year. Urban heat islands posed a particular challenge and required urgent measures, including heatwave preparedness, urban planning, health-care provisions and public awareness initiatives. Older persons were also highly affected by access barriers and housing issues caused by floods and wildfires. Providing assistance adapted to such problems required a whole-of-society, human rights-based and age-sensitive approach. What could be done to further increase the visibility of older people in that context and to

strengthen their active participation in finding solutions?

42. **Mr. Guerra** (Portugal) said that negotiations on an internationally binding instrument were needed to close gaps in the international normative framework in order to protect the human rights of older persons. When addressing disaster preparedness, management, response and recovery, it should be recognized that older persons were already experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Portugal agreed that States must prepare for climate-induced disasters through age-sensitive and gender-responsive legislation and policies and asked the Independent Expert to share best practices regarding measures currently used to protect the rights of older people during natural disasters.

43. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that, while his delegation agreed on the need to consider the rights and interests of older individuals when planning responses to natural disasters, the main objective of rescue services was to ensure the safety of as many people as possible, without disproportionately distributing resources to the detriment of other groups, such as women, children and persons with disabilities. Plans of action should be designed to cover the entire population. Moreover, it was not useful to include in the report general comments from various Committees alongside references to international treaties. Such comments were the private opinions of experts and did not impose additional obligations on States. Furthermore, his delegation did not agree on the need for a separate international convention on ageing, as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing covered all the issues in question.

44. **Ms. Santa Ana Vara** (Mexico) said that the needs of older persons should be prioritized, particularly in climate disaster preparation, response and recovery. The international community would have to take an integral and multifaceted approach, with consideration for the accessibility of communication, transport, specific medical needs and economic limits, which were often the main barriers to the well-being and safety of older persons. Her country's environmental legislation included a focus on the importance of respecting human rights, promoting gender equality and including vulnerable groups, such as older persons, in the implementation of environmental policy. Mexico also considered the intersectionality of aspects of social identity, such as age, gender and ethnic origin, when working towards climate solutions. Her delegation would welcome examples of good practices regarding climate legislation and policies and the participation of older persons in their development.

45. **Mr. Abdullah** (Bangladesh) said that, as a climate-vulnerable country, Bangladesh appreciated the challenges faced by older persons and had considered the group in its natural disaster response plans and early warning system. A national housing scheme provided free houses to older persons displaced by such disasters. With 10 per cent of its population classified as older persons, Bangladesh was working to protect their rights and well-being, despite having limited resources and the eighth-largest population in the world. It had closed gaps in the protection of older persons from neglect and introduced a pilot universal pension scheme. He asked how the office of the Independent Expert could support increased partnership between public and private institutions and mobilize welfare funding for older persons in least developed and other developing countries, and what the office could do for advocacy and awareness-raising around discrimination against older persons resulting from the lack of a legally binding international instrument on their rights.

46. **Ms. Fangco** (Philippines) said that her country faced natural disasters annually and agreed that older persons, in particular those with disabilities, were disproportionately affected. They must not be invisible in the work of the United Nations. Her delegation supported a legally binding international agreement for the human rights of older persons. In August 2023, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines had hosted a workshop to advance the rights of older persons in the Asia-Pacific region and strengthen the international framework for the protection of those rights. She asked the Independent Expert to explain how a convention on such rights could be of substantial benefit to older persons, including in the context of natural disasters.

47. **Mr. Nascimento Dias** (Brazil) said that Brazil was a co-facilitator of the mechanism for the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them and had a long-standing record of engagement on those rights. Established 20 years previously, the National Institute of Older Persons guided related public policy in line with the Madrid Plan of Action, and Brazil was completing the ratification and adoption of the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons. All Member States needed to support the mechanism in order to rapidly improve the human rights situation of older persons.

48. **Ms. Andújar** (Dominican Republic) said that, as a small island developing State, the Dominican Republic appreciated the report's focus on older women and persons with disabilities. She expressed appreciation for the call for a convention on the rights of older persons

that would address those challenges and asked the Independent Expert to elaborate on the importance of data disaggregated by age and other factors in ensuring an effective and rapid response for older adults in emergency situations and to share some best practices in that regard.

49. **Ms. Rahman** (Malaysia) said that integrated data were important to ensure effective service delivery for all. Malaysia was developing a national system for older persons that would collect integrated data, allow for the registration of older persons and provide for disaster management and information-sharing. It would also serve to map older persons throughout the country for active and productive ageing support in line with the national policy for older persons. She asked the Independent Expert how receptive stakeholders were to the establishment of a national database for ageing, which best practices were in use in countries that had set up such a database, how it could be used to strengthen service delivery for all people and what recommendations could be made for improving the care system for older persons.

50. **Ms. Asaju** (Nigeria) said that older persons tended to be excluded in responses to natural disasters and were often already vulnerable, with such disasters exacerbating their situation and pushing them further into poverty and displacement. States must do more to ensure the access of older persons to affordable, personal, integrated and long-term care. Nigeria had long been at the forefront of ageing and welfare and development and was committed to the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons, in particular during emergencies. She asked the Independent Expert what was needed to ensure an international standard in that regard in order to ensure the full participation of older persons in decision-making.

51. **Ms. Schuller** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the report highlighted the challenges faced by older persons when seeking help related to climate change-induced disasters and that prevention, evacuation and rescue initiatives must be adaptable to the needs of all older persons. Strong social protection systems were essential during natural disasters, in particular for older individuals who were dependent on them for key needs, and robust preventive measures were required, such as national emergency plans, improved social assistance systems and culturally mindful community-based measures. The need to prioritize the welfare of older persons had been particularly apparent in Europe in 2023, in view of the severe effects of extreme natural disasters. She asked what the United Nations was doing to further raise

awareness of the specific needs of older persons during climate-induced disasters.

52. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that the population of Morocco, although relatively young, was ageing three times faster than in other world regions, making recent laws relating to social protection crucially important for older persons. As a member of the core group sponsoring the resolution on the right to a clean and sustainable environment, Morocco shared the concerns outlined in the report concerning the realization of the rights of older persons in the context of climate change-induced disasters. Moreover, as a pioneer of gender-responsive budgeting, Morocco continued to support the consideration of gender perspectives in laws, policies and plans of action relating to ageing and older persons in the context of climate change. She requested further information on the importance of gender-responsive budgeting to protecting older persons in climate-related measures, in particular with reference to paragraph 23 of the report.

53. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he echoed the question asked by the representative of Cuba concerning the imposition of unilateral coercive measures, which had also been imposed on his country. He wondered why such measures had not been mentioned in the report.

54. **Ms. Sonkar** (India) said that India was implementing programmes to ensure that older persons lived healthy, empowered, dignified and independent lives, including a national social assistance programme providing financial support for older persons, in particular those below the poverty line; a national programme providing comprehensive preventive, curative and rehabilitative health care for older persons; and pension schemes to provide financial security. In addition, day-care centres and clubs for older persons were being established to facilitate social interaction and support. The Government had issued two advisories for State governments to ensure the safety and security and eliminate all forms of neglect of older persons through a range of supportive measures.

55. **Mr. Lang** (United States of America) said that the United States was committed to addressing the climate crisis and the vulnerable status of older persons in a manner consistent with human rights. Climate change had a significant impact on the health, financial stability and community of older persons. His delegation appreciated the focus in the report on the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by older persons, in particular in the intersection between ageing and gender in data collection and analysis, and on the effect of the climate crisis on older women. In January

2023, the United States and other Member States had signed a joint declaration aimed in part at pursuing economic policies that left no one behind, including older persons. He asked what specific actions Member States could take to support the rights of older persons in the context of climate change.

56. **Mr. Imanuel** (Indonesia) said that the inclusion of older persons in disaster response measures should be ensured long before a disaster occurred and should be considered an investment rather than a burden. Older persons were included in the Indonesian long-term disaster-related reduction plan for the period 2020–2045. In May 2023, Indonesia had, with Australia, jointly facilitated a political declaration on the midterm review of the Sendai Framework to accelerate its implementation, which included emphasis on the full, equal, meaningful and inclusive participation of older persons in disaster risk reduction. He requested concrete examples of how involving older persons in disaster-related policies was linked with achieving sustainable development.

57. **Mr. Beresford-Hill** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that young people, older persons, persons with disabilities and the family were key segments of society. They embodied the core values of compassion, inclusivity and care, and their well-being and empowerment must be ensured. The Order had long championed the dignified and healthy ageing of older persons through care programmes, health-care services and community support. It sponsored programmes for those living with dementia or in isolation across Europe and Africa. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, it jointly operated the largest independent non-profit network of care homes for older persons in Europe. Its humanitarian agency, Malteser International, recognized the need to provide opportunities for persons with disabilities.

58. **Ms. Mahler** (Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons) expressed sympathy for all victims of ongoing crises and disasters worldwide and of the recent earthquakes in Morocco and floods in Libya. Older persons were usually the first affected in such events, yet were often forgotten.

59. One good practice for raising awareness among older persons of the impending climate crisis in the face of digital illiteracy was the use of regular radio programmes and word of mouth to transmit information. In some countries, older persons were prioritized in disaster communications and evacuation programmes. In certain villages, the precise locations of older individuals were known, and they were the first people

evacuated. An international human rights instrument for older persons would serve to raise awareness and ensure that they were not forgotten. It would presumably include an article on disaster management, which would guide Governments on how best to implement measures and include older persons.

60. With regard to the participation of older persons in the preparation for, management of and recovery from climate change-related disasters, only some States had advisory boards of older persons who participated in parliamentary discussions and spokespersons in the decision-making process. Member States should examine ways to give older persons a voice in discussions on laws and policies that affected them, including States with younger populations, which should consider it a life-course approach. All members of the population needed to be supported, with the specific needs of certain groups also considered. Climate change-induced disasters were new, and States could learn from those already most affected.

61. An excellent way to support older persons in climate change-related disasters was to request their input on that support. They must be encouraged to be prepared, but they were often the last to receive information. Disaggregated data would make it much easier to address older persons by providing information on which to base meaningful measures and actions. Intersectionality was critical, as there could be different layers of discrimination involved. Moreover, ageism often hindered the participation of older persons, as they could be considered a burden rather than being seen as individuals with valuable wisdom and contributions to offer whose support should not be underestimated.

62. With regard to raising awareness of the needs of older persons when formulating policies, she noted that the Dominican Republic and Nigeria had national agencies that highlighted laws or policies that needed to better address the specific needs of older persons.

63. **The Chair** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

64. **Mr. González Behmaras** (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that achieving social development was a priority for the Group and that the commitments and objectives of the World Summit for Social Development and the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development were still relevant. The world social summit proposed for 2025, the convening of which should be discussed and agreed upon by Member States, should have a social development approach. Given the increasing inequality in the world, the focus of multilateral efforts should be on addressing inequalities at the country level in order

to eradicate poverty and leave no one behind, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda.

65. For social development to be achieved, multilateralism, international cooperation and solidarity should prevail. Structural inequalities in the international economic order and financial system held developing countries back, and urgent reform of that system was long overdue. International development cooperation, in particular North-South cooperation, remained a catalyst to achieving social development objectives. Developing countries needed more financial support, and compliance with official development assistance commitments should be ensured. The international community and development partners were key in supporting developing countries in implementing their social development agenda.

66. South-South cooperation was a complement to, rather than a substitute for, North-South cooperation. Good examples of South-South cooperation did not exempt developed countries from their long-standing historical responsibilities rooted in inequalities, colonialism and unfair trade.

67. Many developing countries could not advance in their social development efforts while facing unilateral coercive measures, which negatively affected the well-being of their populations and must be eliminated immediately.

68. Strengthening national institutions to implement family policies and respond to problems affecting families had been a main objective of the first International Year of the Family, in 1994. Family-oriented policies and programmes were important tools for fighting poverty, social exclusion and inequality, promoting work-family balance and the empowerment of women and girls and advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity, in support of the 2030 Agenda.

69. The Group recognized the essential contribution of older persons to societies and to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and reiterated that the international community, in particular developing countries, must respond better to the challenges posed by ageing populations and incorporate the changing age structure of populations in poverty eradication efforts. Ageing should be mainstreamed into sustainable development strategies to address gaps in protection and ensure the dignity of older persons and the full realization of their human rights. In addition, disability should be a priority issue in international cooperation for inclusive development in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

70. **Ms. Tariello** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, as indicated in the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report, more ambitious, conscious and concerted action was needed in the seven years remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

71. The unjustified aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine threatened fundamental human rights, and environmental disasters such as those in Libya, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye had deprived people of their homes, lives and dignity. Progress on the Goals had stagnated, and gains made before the pandemic had been reversed, with too many children and young people victims of inequality.

72. Sustainable societies were built on education, which had the power to break the cycle of poverty, foster social development and spark meaningful change in communities. Comprehensive social development policies should prioritize education reforms to guarantee equitable access to education, with investment in infrastructure and teaching methods to adapt to the changing world. Girls and women must be provided with digital education to enable them to engage with all sectors of society. The perspective of young people must be harnessed to drive progress and align education with the challenges of the twenty-first century and beyond.

73. The European Union sought to promote quality education, foster international collaboration, share best practices and support initiatives aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. The statements delivered by the youth delegates at the present meeting were a call to action to take into account the proposals and solutions offered by young people around the world.

74. **Mr. Svana** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the future of the world was in the hands of adults but belonged to young people, with every natural and human-made disaster hindering progress towards a better future. On current trends, over half a billion people would be living in extreme poverty, and only one third of countries would have halved the national poverty level by 2030. Some 4 billion people had no social protection, including many young people and older persons.

75. The European Union remained committed to bolstering national social protection systems in partner countries with a view to enhancing social protection, fostering decent employment opportunities and advancing the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. All countries must tackle poverty, which often affected people unable to work, such as children, young people,

retired pensioners and people with disabilities, leaving them with unmet basic needs and facing inequality in welfare opportunities.

76. Democracy had declined around the world since 2012. Tackling global problems required free civic spaces and speech, a safe environment for human rights defenders and civic activists, and a resolute response to reprisals and threats.

77. The numbers and scale involved in those challenges might be difficult to imagine, but failing to address global problems and meet the agreed targets could lead to mass extinction. The present statement was a call – not to panic but to action.

78. **Mr. Evseenko** (Belarus), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Family, said that the Group considered the family to have a vital role in cultural, political and socioeconomic development and to be a stakeholder in and beneficiary of the 2030 Agenda. Effective family-oriented measures were critical for reducing poverty; promoting work-family balance, equality between women and men and the empowerment of women and girls; and combating social exclusion. The cross-cutting nature of family policy required its integration into overall social policymaking and warranted its inclusion in development measures.

79. As a key institution for human capital development, the family deserved protection and assistance, especially as the basic unit of society responsible for the care and education of children. Ensuring solidarity between generations and investing in the family as the natural environment for children was considered the best social protection strategy. The Group advocated supporting the viability of multigenerational families and encouraging intergenerational dialogues.

80. Reaffirming the primary responsibility of the family for the protection, growth and well-being of children, the Group stressed the importance of a nurturing family environment free from violence and deprivation to the optimal development of a child. Shared parental responsibility was another important element of family-related measures.

81. To enable the full enjoyment of their rights, persons with disabilities, along with their families, should receive the necessary protection and assistance.

82. The Group invited Member States to share best practices in family-centred policymaking at the national, regional and international levels and promote research and awareness-raising activities related to the objectives of the International Year of the Family. He further invited interested Member States to consider

joining the Group of Friends of the Family in order to strengthen cooperation on family-related issues and prioritize the family in global development efforts.

83. **Ms. Narváez Ojeda** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons, said that action must be taken immediately to ensure that older persons participated fully in sustainable development. The present meetings of the Third Committee were an opportunity to assess the opportunities offered by population ageing and the need to consider how to mainstream issues related to older persons across the three pillars of the United Nations.

84. The digital transformation of societies necessitated a human rights-based and life-course approach to ageing and technology to ensure that digital inclusion, digital literacy, universal accessibility and affordability were included in the Road Map for Digital Cooperation. Digital transformation had a particular impact on older women, who were often less exposed to new technologies and therefore had difficulty developing appropriate skills, so investment was needed in the digital literacy and skill development of older women.

85. A largely irreversible shift towards an older population was under way in most countries. However, in practice and in global policy discussions on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, older persons and population ageing were often overlooked. In view of the social, economic and political implications, it was necessary to mainstream ageing by integrating the human rights of older persons and the links between population ageing and sustainable development into measures across all levels of government, including efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

86. The needs of and inequalities faced by older persons should therefore be addressed in all Goal contexts, such as through policy analysis based on an agreed intergovernmental definition of an older person, which must facilitate comprehension of how older age interacted with barriers to hinder the equal participation of older persons in society. The contribution of older persons to sustainable development must also be identified. For example, in discussions around Goal 5, older persons were often contemplated only as objects of care, disregarding both the contribution of older persons, especially older women, to such care and the lack of participation of older persons in decisions concerning their care.

87. Increasing the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data was needed to improve the response to population ageing in Goal-related measures. Much of the data related to Goal indicators

was not currently disaggregated by age, which limited the inclusion of older persons in evidence-based policymaking opportunities as well as in voluntary national reviews, which mirrored their broader underrepresentation in development discourse. True social inclusion required recognition of the great diversity of older persons, respect for their autonomy and choices and increased opportunities to enjoy safe, inclusive and accessible spaces. To that end, the Madrid Plan of Action was crucial for the inclusion of older persons in sustainable development, but it was a non-binding legal instrument that had not been designed to address existing normative gaps in protection.

88. The best way to address those gaps was through concrete measures to advance the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing. The normative protection of the human rights of older persons remained inadequate in the absence of a dedicated international instrument, which was needed regardless of the level of implementation of existing arrangements. The pandemic had had a disproportionate impact on older persons, whose rights had been frequently violated.

89. **Mr. Dang Hoang Giang** (Viet Nam), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that States members of the Association had made remarkable progress towards achieving economic prosperity, holistic development and integration and improved quality of life for all people in the region, driven by their commitment to building a resilient, inclusive, people-oriented community.

90. At the eleventh ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development, in 2023, a joint statement was adopted to accelerate the implementation of ASEAN commitments for gender quality through gender mainstreaming and social inclusion. ASEAN had embraced the regional framework and action plan to implement the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection, aimed at expanding access to health care, education and social services for all by developing social safety nets to protect vulnerable groups. In addition, the Association continued to target poverty and inequality by addressing their root causes.

91. Although women and girls comprised just over half the population of the region, obstacles hindered the realization of their full potential. ASEAN member States had therefore committed to implementing the ASEAN Declaration on Gender Equality and Family Development and the ASEAN Committee on Women Work Plan 2021-2025 to enhance the empowerment of women and girls.

92. To unleash the potential of the young people of the ASEAN region, ASEAN member States were implementing evidence-based youth development policies and programmes. The ASEAN Youth Development Index was an indicator of success in key areas. The holistic approach provided young people with opportunities to influence policies affecting their lives and fostered entrepreneurship and innovation.

93. All ASEAN member States had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025, aimed at mainstreaming those rights, had been adopted to enhance regional implementation of the Convention, eliminate discrimination and ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities. Building on the Bali Declaration on the Enhancement of the Role and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the ASEAN Community, the Association had worked consistently through a range of bodies to meet the needs and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, with particular attention to vulnerable groups.

94. The challenge of addressing the needs of older people in the region was accentuated by the demographic shift towards an ageing population, which necessitated a comprehensive and integrated system- and life-cycle-based approach. ASEAN had launched a number of initiatives to enhance access to essential services, foster an environment supporting healthy ageing and ensure the inclusion and empowerment of older persons across the region.

95. **Ms. González López** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Central American Integration System, said that the Regional Integral Social Policy 2020–2040 contained people-centred guidelines that took into account both human rights and intergenerational considerations, as well as cross-cutting issues such as equality, gender equity and multi-ethnic and multicultural diversity, including the cosmovision of Indigenous Peoples, populations of African descent and others. The policy was aimed at including all people in the region, especially those in vulnerable situations, in social protection systems and providing them with dignified housing, communities and social settings with high-quality basic services, while generating education, work and business opportunities, including through the development of local economic and social infrastructure. The policy contained fundamental tools for reducing poverty, social exclusion, inequality and social, regional and gender gaps, which would help to strengthen the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to build more resilient societies equipped to counteract the negative impacts of potential economic and social shocks

resulting from climate- or health-related emergencies. It also represented an opportunity to highlight the importance of basing social protection and inclusion mechanisms on innovative practices that made it possible to achieve more and reach more people through better use of resources.

96. States members of the System insisted that its regional institutions must prioritize and implement affirmative actions for increasing social inclusion and participation among members of the most vulnerable groups. Inclusive economic growth, social progress and the sustainable development of States in the region must be promoted through the design and implementation of national political plans and programmes aimed at ensuring the universal enjoyment of all human rights. Universal social protection systems tailored to each country's needs could help to address the multiple causes of inequality and poverty by alleviating certain expenses, contributing to the achievement of goals relating to dignified work, health, equality and empowerment and fostering social inclusion for older persons and people with disabilities. Older adults faced particular vulnerabilities during global emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, while persons with disabilities experienced major challenges owing to inadequate social safety nets. Maximum priority must be placed on eliminating existing barriers and ensuring sustainable, sufficient and lifelong protection to all. Global strategies must also be drafted to address specific challenges such as the inclusive development of persons with disabilities, to ensure that their perspectives and challenges were guaranteed in national policies, plans and legislation and through national, regional and global implementation as part of the 2030 Agenda, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

97. Similarly, young people were assets for the building of fairer societies, and their full and meaningful participation essential in the design, implementation, supervision and assessment of policies and programmes. Family also played a key role in social development; therefore family-specific needs and challenges also needed to be addressed. Lastly, cooperation and international solidarity were essential components in helping developing countries to strengthen their human, institutional and technological capacity and thus achieve people-centred sustainable development.

98. **Mr. Wallace** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that, despite the many efforts made to answer the yearly calls to implement the 2030 Agenda and to leave no one behind, progress towards inclusive and sustained development had been stymied by

increasing inequalities, economic volatilities, global conflicts and climate change, among other factors. The commitments outlined in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development remained as relevant today as in 1995. The world social summit proposed by the Secretary-General for 2025 would provide an opportunity to review gaps and progress in advancing the people-centred approach to development called for in the Declaration and Programme of Action and a means to accelerate action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

99. The susceptibility of the Caribbean region to external shocks was a constant reminder of the inherent vulnerabilities of small island developing States, where climate change and environmental degradation thwarted development and the ability to deliver on commitments. Although the Caribbean people would continue to tailor social development policies to their regional context, North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation were required to support national efforts aimed at building resilience, reducing inequalities and alleviating poverty and to realize the aforementioned commitments and those of the 2030 Agenda. CARICOM reiterated its urgent call for reform of the international financial architecture and the provision of an enabling environment for developing countries to actively participate in and benefit from the global economy. The multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index and the Bridgetown Initiative must be vigorously pursued.

100. CARICOM welcomed the convening of the three health-related meetings held during the recent high-level week of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. Given its high non-communicable disease burden, the region continued to prioritize primary and specialized health services for their prevention, screening, treatment and control, including risk factor reduction. Caribbean Wellness Day was celebrated annually in September to raise awareness of and promote healthy behaviours at the individual, community, institutional, national and regional levels. Education aimed at advancing human capital development was also a central pillar of the region's social development framework, which included the implementation of the CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy and Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education. Cognizant of the serious impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and on the lives of students, teachers and communities, and of the need to bolster investment in support of regional education financing, CARICOM was committed to enabling students to become confident Caribbean citizens as power brokers and

arbiters of their destinies, capable of making meaningful contributions to the international community. Addressing all aspects of inequality was essential to eradicating poverty, advancing social progress and achieving sustainable development for all – and an ongoing battle for small island developing States. CARICOM had recently celebrated 50 years of resilience and transformative change and would continue to play its part in ensuring that no one was left behind.

101. **Ms. Šmidt** (Slovenia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Slovenian young people faced many challenges in becoming independent, owing to the housing crisis, a lack of decent pay and exponential growth in the cost of living, which could lead to a “brain drain”. In the fast-paced era of the Internet, social media and emerging artificial intelligence technologies, when everything seemed possible, it was a challenge to comprehend and use those tools responsibly, resulting in many mental health issues. Carelessness for the consequences of one's actions was also reflected in once-anomalous natural disasters, which now occurred with alarming regularity. However, it was not only individuals but decision makers who must be held accountable. With the midway point for Agenda 2030 implementation approaching and only 15 per cent of targets on track, deepening distrust and a lack of transparency in institutions were worrisome. With regard to Sustainable Development Goal 5, achieving true gender equality was not just about focusing on young girls and women, but also about addressing the vulnerability of young boys to toxic masculinity owing to a scarcity of positive male role models.

102. **Ms. Rodríguez Mancía** (Guatemala) said that her country continued to improve living conditions for its people, seeking a balance between social, economic and environmental development and the promotion and protection of human rights for all at the national and global levels. The road to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals had required major structural changes. The fact that the Committee was starting its work with the current agenda item reflected States' commitment and leadership with regard to actively reducing inequalities and strengthening actions to guarantee social inclusion for all, but such action required access to financing, particular attention to middle-income countries and an appropriate response to the effects of climate change and natural disasters.

103. Guatemala was committed to the development of a legally binding instrument to promote and protect the rights of older persons in accordance with the principles of dignity, equality, non-discrimination, autonomy, independence and effective participation. Strengthened

actions and investments were also needed to empower people with disabilities and thus ensure their independence, social inclusion and participation in political decision-making processes. To achieve that, they needed to thoroughly understand their rights with a view to the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals. Meanwhile, young people represented an important and positive force for forging the future of humanity and making a valuable contribution to achieving Our Common Agenda through new strategies based on equity and justice. The future depended on investment in future generations as key actors in social development, but major steps must be taken to reduce gaps limiting their participation.

104. States were encouraged to commit to making the rights of older persons, persons with disabilities, young people and people in vulnerable situations central elements of the Summit of the Future. Achieving social development required quality education with a human rights perspective, equal opportunities, social inclusion, democratic institutions and access to basic services, while placing people at the heart of those actions to ensure that no one was left behind.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.