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Chair: Ms. Al-Temimi (Vice-Chair)..... (Qatar)

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In the absence of Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland), Ms. Al-Temimi (Qatar), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 68: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/72/164, A/72/218, A/72/275, A/72/276 and A/72/356)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/72/208)

1. **Mr. Skinner-Kl e** (Guatemala) said that the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development had given fresh impetus to collective efforts to eradicate violence against children. His country's national development plan contained specific guidelines on childhood, aimed at enabling children to grow up free from violence and exercise their rights fully. In addition, Guatemala had conducted a voluntary national review in 2017 within the framework of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, following which steps had been taken to prepare for a national census so that progress could be measured.

2. The question was whether Member States and the United Nations were working together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in an inclusive manner. Much remained to be done, since children continued to be the primary victims of chronic malnutrition or shortages of medication.

3. Owing to its geographical location and economic and institutional factors, Guatemala was particularly vulnerable to human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Growing migratory flows towards the northern hemisphere had made Guatemala a country of origin, transit and destination for international trafficking. Human trafficking was a form of modern slavery with devastating consequences for its victims, and the international community should remain united in its determination to combat it until it had been completely eradicated.

4. In recent years there had also been an increase in mass kidnappings, violent attacks and the use of children for extortion, in suicide attacks or as human shields, all of which were not only violations of international law but also an affront to humanity. Member States must improve their cooperation, especially in areas such as sharing intelligence and developing best practices.

5. **Ms. Desta** (Ethiopia) said that the commitments of Ethiopia to the promotion and protection of the rights of

the child, which emanated from its Constitution and international and regional agreements, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, were translated into detailed policies and laws at the federal and regional levels. For example, in its second Growth and Transformation Plan, the Government had recognized the importance of investing in children for the achievement of inclusive sustainable development. The comprehensive national child policy focused on development and growth, prevention and protection, and rehabilitation, care and support. A national plan of action on children had been established with a view to mainstreaming the rights of the child into national development programmes and plans. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs had developed a management information system for collecting, organizing, storing and disseminating data on the issues of children. With the aim of increasing the registration of births and other key life events, a national registration agency and system had been established and social mobilization and advocacy programmes were conducted. Telephone hotlines had been set up in different regions of the country to facilitate the reporting of violence and abuse against children, enabling the provision of prompt services to victims.

6. Member States did not have the same levels of capacity to implement commitments that had resource implications and required technical know-how. Greater cooperation and partnerships at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels were therefore required.

7. **Ms. Halchenko** (Ukraine) said that her country, as a party to the numerous United Nations conventions on child protection, ensured their implementation in national legislation. Every year, the Government approved a national action plan on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2016, Ukraine had ratified the Optional Protocol to that Convention with the caveat that, owing to the temporary occupation of a part of Ukraine, the implementation of its obligations under the Protocol was limited and not guaranteed. In 2017, a law on inclusive education had been adopted, ensuring equal access to high-quality education for all Ukrainian children.

8. According to the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, since its beginning, the Russian aggression against her country had resulted in the deaths of 90 boys and 47 girls, in addition to the 80 children killed in the crash of the MH17 plane shot down by a Russian missile. Her Government was doing its utmost to strengthen social protection for displaced children and families with children. More than 1.7 million internally displaced persons, including 232,000 children, were

currently registered in Ukraine. Internally displaced children were more likely to have been exposed to conflict-related violence, including bullying. In July 2017, Ukraine, in close cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), had launched an anti-bullying campaign. Ukraine highly appreciated the financial and technical assistance provided by UNICEF and its partners.

9. **Mr. Panayotov** (Bulgaria) said that all child policies in his country followed a human rights-based approach, taking into consideration the principle of the best interests of the child as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Bulgaria had made significant progress in recent years in advancing child rights and improving child protection in areas such as childcare, early childhood development, inclusive education, juvenile justice and the prevention and elimination of violence against children. Special attention was paid to children with disabilities and children on the move, and the Government granted refugee and migrant children the same rights as Bulgarian children. Fruitful partnerships had been established with civil society, the private sector and the media to advocate child protection and raise awareness of child rights. Some strategic corporate partnerships had been recognized as best practices for integrated corporate engagement and corporate social responsibility both in Bulgaria and worldwide.

10. His Government attached great importance to the views and opinions of children themselves and their meaningful participation in decision-making. A National Children's Council had been established, ensuring the effective involvement of children in all decisions affecting childhood and the future. The Pre-school and School Education Act, which had entered into force in 2016, had been drafted in close consultation with children and marked a crucial step forward in the Government's efforts to bring the Sustainable Development Goals closer to children by including a topic on them in the curriculum.

11. In recent years, his country had been recognized as a leader in the region in childcare and child policies, and UNICEF had played a vital role in those efforts. Bulgaria had substantially increased its technical and financial assistance to countries in the region for advancing child rights and ensuring the well-being of children. As a co-founder and co-chair of the Group of Friends for Children and Sustainable Development Goals, it was also a global champion for children. As President of the Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child from 2017 to 2018, Bulgaria was making every effort to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities were protected

and upheld. Child rights remained high on the agenda for the forthcoming Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2018. Bulgaria had highlighted child rights as a main priority in its bid for a seat on the Human Rights Council from 2019 to 2021.

12. **Ms. Mukhtar** (Sudan) said that her country had worked with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and the High Commissioner for Refugees to promote child protection. The country had established the National Council for Child Welfare, as well as human rights protection units within the armed forces. It was worth noting that since 1956, laws regulating the armed forces had banned the recruitment of children under the age of 18.

13. In order to prevent violations of the rights of children, the Sudanese Government had appointed a prosecutor to investigate crimes that had allegedly taken place in Darfur from 2003 through the end of 2017, including crimes related to the violation of children's rights. A fact-finding committee had been created to investigate kidnappings and recruitment of children in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

14. In March 2016, the Sudan had signed a joint action plan with the United Nations on the protection of children in armed conflict. Laws on humanitarian access to former conflict areas had been amended, which had provided children with increased access to immunization and other medical care. The Sudan wished to thank the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF for providing housing and psychological services for children who had fought in the ranks of the Justice and Equality Movement.

15. **Mr. Ja Song Nam** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that, over the past 70 years since its founding, his country had fulfilled its duty and role as protector of the rights of the child through the inclusion of relevant provisions in its Constitution and the adoption of social welfare policies and legislative and practical measures. Steps had been taken to provide children with disabilities with sufficient secondary education in accordance with the new 12-year educational programme and good conditions for learning, living and rehabilitation. Efforts had been strengthened to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights treaties and to increase investment in health services for children. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child

and the Optional Protocol thereto on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

16. His country faced grave challenges in protecting the rights of children owing to the sanctions imposed by the United States of America and other hostile forces, including the Security Council. The persistent and vicious blockade and sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea seriously threatened children's right to survival, negatively affecting the production of school textbooks and materials and child nutrition. As a result, most cooperation activities between his country and child-related international organizations were shrinking in scope or prohibited. Such inhumane sanctions constituted despicable violations of the ideal of humanitarianism and the spirit of the Convention and must be lifted without condition or delay.

17. **Ms. Mehdiyeva** (Azerbaijan) said that the military aggression by Armenia against her country and the occupation of a large portion of Azerbaijani territories had been accompanied by devastating effects on civilians, including children. In April 2016, the deliberate targeting of densely populated areas by the armed forces of Armenia had caused civilian casualties, the deaths of two children and substantial damage to schools, kindergartens and medical facilities. In July 2017, during another targeted attack, two civilians, a 2-year-old girl and her grandmother, had been killed. In August 2017, a 13-year-old boy had been wounded by the armed forces of Armenia in Tovuz district.

18. Her Government had adopted policies that had significantly improved the situation of children in the country. During the consideration of the third and fourth periodic reports of Azerbaijan, the Committee on the Rights of the Child had welcomed the adoption of legislative measures, the signing and ratification of conventions of the International Labour Organization and the Council of Europe and the establishment of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs. A law on combating domestic violence had been adopted, and workshops had been conducted across the country to raise awareness of domestic violence and prevention mechanisms, provide support to victims and train law enforcement officers to respond in an appropriate manner to cases of domestic violence and abuse. With a view to enhancing the participation of children in decision-making, forums of Azerbaijani children had been held in 2009, 2011 and 2014, and the proposals of participants had been integrated into relevant Government programmes. In the past three years, 39 projects had been implemented to protect and support children with mental and physical conditions and their families. The Children Paralympic Committee

had been established to support the rehabilitation of children with disabilities, their integration into society and their engagement in sport.

19. **Ms. Likina** (Russian Federation) said that the promotion and protection of the rights of children and the creation of conditions conducive to their safe and full development were of continued importance to global development. The Russian Federation was committed to strengthening cooperation in that regard, based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and guided by the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, and to strictly upholding its international legal obligations to protect the rights of children. At its seventy-eighth session in May 2018, the Committee on the Rights of the Child would examine the initial report of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

20. Ensuring the rights of children was a permanent focus of the Russian leadership, and child issues were included in most national programmes. As a result of measures taken by State bodies and local authorities to implement the National Children's Strategy for the period 2012–2017, a number of positive trends had been seen in the area of the prevention of child abandonment. In addition, the birth rate had increased, the child mortality rate had decreased and the socioeconomic situation of families with children had improved. Building on the success of the strategy, the President had signed, on 29 May 2017, a decree proclaiming a decade of childhood from 2018 to 2027, with the aim of further improving the State child protection policy.

21. Special attention should be paid to strengthening the traditional family as the natural environment for the growth and well-being of its members, in particular children. In that regard, the Russian Federation called for more active engagement with the Group of Friends of the Family to raise global awareness of issues relating to traditional family values.

22. The Russian Federation expressed its regret that the Ukrainian delegation was once again using the platform of the Third Committee to impose its politically motivated views and called upon Ukraine not to politicize the discussion.

23. **Mr. Al-Teraifi** (Bahrain) said that his country's parliament had enacted a number of new laws to promote the rights of children, including a unified family law, a child welfare law and a law protecting children from economic exploitation and outlawing all forms of child labour. The Child Law of 2012 and the Domestic Violence Law of 2015 demonstrated the

country's commitment to give priority to children's issues and protect their rights. Since the 1992 ratification by Bahrain of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the country had established various centres and units to provide child protection services. The most important such initiative was the creation in 2017 of a national centre under the Ministry of Labour and Social Development whose purpose was to protect children from abuse and neglect.

24. Bahrain had launched a national strategy for children for the period from 2012 to 2016 that focused on the rights to health, education, protection and freedom from discrimination. The strategy was included in a memorandum of understanding signed by the National Commission for Childhood, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development with the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF and was developed by members of governmental and non-governmental organizations with input from children themselves. The national strategy for children had been adopted by the Cabinet and distributed among the ministries, and was currently in the follow-up stage. Government plans for 2015–2018 included implementation of the strategy and drafting of a new strategy for children that was in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

25. **Ms. Nguele Makoulet** (Congo) said that measures to promote children's well-being and best interests were at the heart of government policy. To fulfil its international commitments, Congo had passed several laws, the most important of which was the Child Protection Act of 14 June 2010, which established equal rights and responsibilities for all children in the country and prohibited child marriage. Other examples of her country's commitment were its child protection coordination mechanism and its strategic framework for strengthening the national child protection system. Among its efforts in the area of international cooperation, the Government had signed an agreement with Benin in 2011 on combating child trafficking.

26. Congo had made children's education a priority and in 2012 it had abolished all fees for tuition and exam registration, with the result that school enrolment had reached over 90 per cent. Of particular note was the increase in the percentage of girls enrolled in public schools.

27. In partnership with civil society and non-governmental organizations, her Government had continued to support children with disabilities by, for example, integrating a number of children with visual disabilities into regular schools and training speech and

physical therapists to treat children with cleft lip or palate and cerebral palsy.

28. As part of its 2017–2021 national social policy, Congo was determined to improve its social services in order to better protect children, but more support was needed from partners.

29. **Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun** (Myanmar) said that the Constitution of Myanmar guaranteed access to free primary education for all children. Public spending on education had significantly increased with the introduction of free secondary school education and the provision of free textbooks, exercise books and school uniforms for primary students. Efforts were also being made to reduce school drop-out rates.

30. Peace was a prerequisite for children's development. At the second meeting of the 21st-Century Panglong Conference in May 2017, the Union Peace Accord Part 1 had been signed. It contained 37 principles, which included safeguarding the basic rights of women and children and improving their quality of life.

31. Since the introduction of the plan of action for the prevention of recruitment of minors in 2012, Myanmar had been working closely with the country task force on monitoring and reporting to prevent the recruitment of minors into the military and to discharge those who had already been recruited. With the support of UNICEF and other organizations, discharged minors were receiving psychosocial support and vocational training. The reintegration process would be conducted in accordance with the spirit of the Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups, signed by Myanmar earlier in 2017.

32. Myanmar had also reviewed its legislation and a new children's rights law had been submitted to parliament for its approval. In addition, Myanmar had recently deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations its instrument of ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which contained provisions on the protection and promotion of children's rights.

33. **Mr. Moussa** (Djibouti) said that children's rights were key to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Children needed to grow up in an environment that would enable them to exercise their rights and realize their potential. Djibouti called on all parties to conflict to respect human rights and international humanitarian law. When childhoods were destroyed, it was a loss for humankind, and children who had been affected by violence must receive support.

34. Djibouti had introduced compulsory and free education for all children aged 6 to 16 years in 2000, and in 2016 the Ministry of Education had launched a major programme to improve the quality of education by ensuring that teaching material was better tailored to students' needs and by providing training for teachers and raising their status. In addition, his country's policy of promoting girls' education had borne fruit. Since 2007, the gender parity index at the primary level had risen from 0.76 to 0.98.

35. A considerable amount of data had been collected on children with disabilities by the Ministry of Women and Family between February and April 2016. Caring for children with disabilities was a priority at the highest level of Government, and the Ministry of Women and Family was formulating a strategy and a plan of action to support those children and their families.

36. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that childhood should be incorporated into every development goal. Algeria had increased its education budget tenfold in the previous 15 years, with free education offered to over eight million students, including to children in refugee camps in Tindouf. Significant achievements had been made in improving the efficiency of the Algeria education system and enabling all children to receive primary education. The Government had also recently enacted a child protection law containing provisions on the protection of at-risk children, on child offenders and on child protection within specialized centres.

37. **Mr. Douli** (Togo) said that his country had ratified most international instruments on children's rights and had strengthened its legal framework on promoting and protecting the rights of children through the adoption of its Child Code in 2007. Thanks to greater enforcement of the law on child trafficking, a number of traffickers had been brought to justice since 2005 and the victims had been provided with assistance.

38. Awareness had been raised of children's rights with the help of community radio, which had been successful in changing behaviour and attitudes. As a result, rates of physical punishment and other forms of violence or mistreatment within the community and in schools and vocational training institutions had fallen. Other programmes had been launched with technical and financial support from UNICEF, including a hotline for reporting violence against and mistreatment of children.

39. Togo had also worked to improve the quality of education services, including by building 800 new fully-equipped classrooms, recruiting more teaching staff and renovating teacher training institutes. In the area of health, Togo had set up six prosthesis and rehabilitation

centres for persons with disabilities. Regular campaigns were run on the prevention of disability arising from illness, and seven vaccines were provided free of charge to children and women, which had brought about a significant reduction in the infant mortality rate. A number of centres had also been set up to provide advice and counselling on reproductive health for young people and adolescents, psycho-socio-legal support for children and counselling and assistance for children who had experienced sexual violence.

40. **Mr. Espiritu** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that the Order continued to provide prenatal, maternal and neonatal care across the globe. In accordance with its 900-year-old mission of caring for the sick and vulnerable, its Bethlehem hospital delivered 70 per cent of all babies in the district, it provided maternity and paediatric services in Chad and Madagascar, and it was building centres in Togo and Uganda. It would soon open a unit in the United Republic of Tanzania for Burundian refugee mothers and a health centre for women and children in Timor-Leste. It was also actively engaged in combating child malnutrition across Africa.

41. The Order continued to strengthen its response to the increasing need for assistance among migrants and refugees, especially children. In collaboration with the Italian navy and coastguard, its medical teams had cared for 54,000 migrants in the southern Mediterranean to date. It supported medical facilities serving refugees, including children, in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey. Outside the Middle East, it provided medical and humanitarian assistance to refugees in Germany, and it delivered food to thousands of internally displaced children in South Sudan. Given its growing concern for the victims of human trafficking, 26 per cent of whom were minors, the Order had recently appointed two special ambassadors-at-large to coordinate its efforts worldwide to combat it.

42. **Ms. Larrabee** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that several million children were currently on the move and, in the period from 2015 to 2016, 300,000 children had travelled alone or been separated from their families, a five-fold increase compared with the period from 2010 to 2011. IFRC welcomed the decision of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children to devote a sizeable portion of her report to the vulnerabilities and needs of children on the move and concurred with her findings. The movement had a long-standing history of working to protect children on the move, providing emergency health-care services and safe spaces for unaccompanied minors, running reception and transit

centres, visiting detention centres, providing psychosocial care and supporting access to education, food, shelter and legal counsel. The Turkish Red Crescent Society, for example, managed 28 child-friendly spaces in camps and urban areas.

43. IFRC was establishing new partnerships to reflect the diversity of actors working in the field, most recently joining the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. It had also joined the steering group of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. In addition to co-leading the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action with the United Nations Population Fund, IFRC had helped national societies to ensure that young people and children on the move had a voice in identifying risks and providing solutions. For example, the Red Crescent Society of Bangladesh had held regular discussions with displaced children to discuss what needed to be improved. IFRC was currently carrying out country-level evaluations of its work with children on the move in Benin, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia and Zimbabwe. It was also co-leading an inter-agency effort with International Social Service to develop an open online course on appropriate care for children on the move.

44. **Mr. Cassidy** (Observer for the International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that while most States had ratified the two main international conventions on children and work, child labour had not been eliminated. SDG Alliance 8.7, a multi-stakeholder initiative spearheaded by ILO, had approved measures to eradicate forced labour and child labour in line with Sustainable Development Goal 8.7. The members of that Alliance had developed new global estimates on child labour showing that 152 million children were engaged in child labour, and nearly half of those were engaged in hazardous work. Although child labour had declined between 2012 and 2016, progress had slowed. Policy responses to child labour needed to be integrated into national development efforts and adapted to local circumstances.

45. Members of ILO had adopted a new international standard on responses to devastating conflicts and disasters that paid special attention to vulnerable populations such as children. The Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All, co-chaired by ILO, had issued a resource on child labour in emergencies that would help humanitarian workers design relevant strategies. ILO had also addressed the issue of child labour in complex global supply chains, and had provided technical assistance on social protection for children and families.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

46. **Mr. Alkadi** (Saudi Arabia), responding to the statement by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic at the thirteenth meeting of the Committee, said that the representative's remarks had contained false information and showed that the Syrian regime had continued to lie, mislead the international community and deflect public attention from the regime's heinous crimes. It was ironic that the Syrian representative had accused the Saudi Arabian Government of violating human rights when Syrian forces massacred hundreds of Syrians, most of them children, on a daily basis, using internationally-banned weapons and in flagrant violation of international instruments, Security Council resolutions and ceasefire agreements. The Syrian representative should refrain from discussing children's rights when his Government was unconcerned about rights or the thousands of killed and wounded and the thousands of displaced persons.

47. Saudi Arabia observed international laws and instruments and cooperated with relevant actors to address issues of concern. It provided humanitarian assistance to Syria and other States suffering from conflict and humanitarian disasters. Saudi Arabia would discuss such matters with officials of the United Nations and legitimate States only.

48. **Ms. Thinn** (Myanmar), responding to remarks made by the representative of Bangladesh at the fourteenth meeting, said that with respect to displaced persons at the border, the Minister for the Office of the State Counselor of Myanmar had recently visited Bangladesh and officials of both countries had agreed to establish a working group on the safe and dignified return of displaced persons on the basis of a 1993 agreement. The Home Affairs Minister of Bangladesh would also pay a visit to Myanmar to discuss further cooperation.

49. As a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Government of Myanmar viewed the rights of women and children as a major priority. The Government had submitted reports pursuant to that Convention and followed the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Security forces in Myanmar were aware of their obligations under the Geneva Conventions and refrained from harming non-combatants, particularly women and children. At a time when Myanmar and Bangladesh were cooperating to resolve the issue, such unconstructive language was unhelpful. Myanmar would continue to work with regional and international partners to address the issue of displaced persons.

50. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that for 25 years, Armenia had been faced with refugees fleeing the Azerbaijani aggression, which had been unleashed in an effort to suppress the human rights and self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Her country had no choice but to integrate those refugees. In April 2016, Azerbaijan had unleashed further aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh, which had resulted in civilian casualties and a new wave of displacement.

51. With respect to the events in Khojaly, the civilian deaths had been the result of political intrigue and power struggles in Azerbaijan. Former President Mutallibov had stated that the assault on Khojaly had not been a surprise attack, and that a corridor had been kept open by Armenia to allow people to leave. However, a column of civilians had been fired upon, a fact later confirmed by the former President, who had linked that criminal act to attempts of the opposition to remove him from power.

52. The Azerbaijani delegation did not share the view that any death of a child was a tragedy, as it considered Armenian children to be enemies of the State. One of the first casualties of the 2016 aggression by Azerbaijan had been a 12-year-old boy who had been killed in a missile attack in front of his school. The 2014 killing of a 17-year-old teenager by a criminal group was an example of the barbaric acts of Azerbaijani subversive groups that had become common in the conflict area. Armenian settlements along the border had also been the target of indiscriminate shelling, as in Chinari in the summer of 2017, when a kindergarten near Azerbaijani positions had been targeted by heavy gunfire. Casualties were only averted in that case thanks to the actions of the kindergarten teachers and military personnel, and Armenia thanked the International Committee of the Red Cross for having equipped a safe room in the building days before the incident.

53. Armenia denied the allegations of Azerbaijan regarding civilian deaths in July 2017 along the line of contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan and stressed that the incident had been the result of a ceasefire violation by Azerbaijani forces. The Azerbaijani authorities had refused to implement agreements on mechanisms to investigate ceasefire violations.

54. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that the Armenian delegation had distorted the essence of the conflict. It was clear that Armenia occupied a significant portion of Azerbaijani territory and had committed ethnic cleansing in the occupied territories, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Concerning Khojaly, even high-ranking Armenian officials had admitted their

responsibility in the tragedy. The current President of Armenia, who had been the Minister of Defence at the time of the incident, had stated that such upheavals were necessary, even if thousands had to die. He had also said that before the incident in Khojaly, the Azerbaijanis had thought that they had been in dialogue with Armenia, and had thought that Armenia would not raise its hand against the civilian population.

55. The Security Council had adopted resolutions demanding the unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces from occupied territory. Security Council resolution 822 (1993) demanded immediate withdrawal of all forces from the Kalbajar district. Security Council resolution 853 (1993) condemned the seizure of Agdam and other occupied areas of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, the General Assembly had demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Armenian forces from all the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

56. Azerbaijan, which suffered from the devastating consequences of armed conflict and occupation, was the party that was most interested in making peace. Armenia should constructively engage in peace negotiations and substantive talks and should not resort to provocations such as military exercises in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. It should also withdraw its armed forces. Mechanisms to monitor ceasefire violations should be an integral part of the overall peace settlement process; otherwise, they would only perpetuate the current state of occupation.

57. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that Azerbaijan referred only to certain provisions of Security Council resolutions. They included no reference to the armed forces of the State of Armenia but rather indicated that the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding military zone were under the control of the Nagorno-Karabakh Defence Army. It should be emphasized that Security Council resolution 822 (1993) referred to "local Armenian forces". Moreover, the resolutions condemned ceasefire violations and demanded the cessation of hostilities and unimpeded access for humanitarian workers. Those measures were addressed to Azerbaijan and had been rejected by that country.

58. It was unsurprising that Azerbaijan did not deny the allegations of the Armenian delegation regarding the killings of children, as atrocities by Azerbaijani soldiers had been well-documented by Azerbaijanis themselves on social networks. The killing of Armenians was not considered a crime by Azerbaijan, as the pardon of Ramil Safarov had shown. Agreements reached in Vienna and St. Petersburg had aimed at consolidating a ceasefire regime and avoiding casualties. By refusing to

honour its commitments, Azerbaijan was responsible for the suffering on all sides.

59. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that the Armenian delegation disagreed with what the President of Armenia had said. For example, the President of Armenia had once said that Agdam was not an Armenian city. One might ask, then, why Armenian soldiers were stationed there and in the Fizuli district of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that in July 2017, when a two-year-old Azerbaijani girl had been killed in a deliberate Armenian attack, ordinary Armenians had taken to social media to call for more killings of Azerbaijanis, showing the extent to which hatred had flourished in Armenia.

60. Concerning the April War of 2016, Azerbaijan had taken appropriate measures to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensure the safety of its citizens. Armenia could not deny that from the first day of the conflict, combat operations had been carried out in Azerbaijani territories only. It was also worth noting that 80 per cent of the Armenian servicemen killed in combat during the April War were from Armenia. Azerbaijan was fully committed to the peace settlement and urged Armenia to engage constructively in peace negotiations and withdraw its armed forces from occupied Azerbaijani territory.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.