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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 14th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 October 2017, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Idris (Vice-Chair) . . . . . (Eritrea)  
*later:* Mr. Gunnarsson (Chair) . . . . . (Iceland)

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*In the absence of Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland), Mr. Idris (Eritrea), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.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. Sisa** (Botswana) said that Botswana had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in June 2017, to safeguard education during armed conflict. The Government had amended the Children's Act of 2009, strengthened legislation on human and drug trafficking and adopted additional measures to confront the growing problem of alcohol and substance abuse, particularly among youth, by improving access to quality education and rehabilitation services.

2. Botswana was fully committed to Sustainable Development Goal 4. Its inclusive education policy sought to improve access to education and training from early childhood to tertiary education, targeting children in underprivileged groups, remote and marginalized communities and children with disabilities. Botswana had nearly achieved universal access to education and gender parity. The primary school enrolment rate had been steadily increasing, reaching 93.2 per cent in 2014, and the dropout rate had been reduced to 0.6 per cent in 2012–2013. The transition rate from junior to senior secondary school had increased to 67.7 per cent in 2013. Access to technical and vocational education and training had also improved, which helped to equip young people with industry-relevant skills and prepare them for employment opportunities. Additionally, the enrolment rate in tertiary education had increased to 21.3 per cent in 2015–2016, although it remained low. Despite those advances, the education system faced many challenges, including inadequate inclusiveness, underuse of information and communications technology (ICT), a misalignment between the skills developed in the education system and those needed in the economy, and a decline in performance at all levels. In response, Botswana had adopted a strategic plan for the education and training sector to improve the quality and relevance of education and training, which included revising curricula, providing training and motivational programmes to teachers, and increasing access to tertiary education.

3. **Ms. Al-Emadi** (Qatar) said that the broad ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was proof of the political will to condemn violence against children and violations of their rights. Millions of children continued to bear the brunt of the effects of natural disasters, wars and conflicts in which they were murdered, displaced, recruited, sexually exploited and deprived of their right to education. The international community must therefore intensify its efforts to protect all children around the world.

4. National legislative and executive measures, including the Qatar National Vision 2030 and the national development strategy, prioritized the promotion and protection of children's rights. Qatar complied fully with its obligations under the Convention and its Optional Protocols and had been fostering international cooperation to meet the needs of children in education and health. Nevertheless, efforts were hampered by the illegal unilateral sanctions imposed on Qatar, which adversely affected the lives of thousands of children. There had been several cases in which children had been separated from their parents, in violation of international law and numerous human rights instruments. Nevertheless, the Government resolved to continue its efforts to fulfil its ethical and legal obligations to promote and ensure human rights for all people, including children, and looked forward to continued cooperation and partnership at the regional and international levels.

5. **Mr. Montilla** (Dominican Republic) said that the Government's national development strategy 2030 set specific targets for protecting children's rights. As a result, there had been advances in birth registration, health insurance, illness and child nutrition. Under the National Institute for Comprehensive Early Childhood Care, the number of children receiving care had quintupled, allowing single mothers and female heads of household to resume their studies or return to work. The Government had also increased public spending in education to extend the school day and increase the number of schools. With regard to health care, a comprehensive care centre for persons with disabilities had been established to evaluate, diagnose and rehabilitate children up to the age of 10 years who were on the autism spectrum or suffered from infantile cerebral palsy or Down syndrome. As a Caribbean country, the Dominican Republic was extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. It was therefore essential to strengthen the national capacity to collect data on the vulnerability of children and adolescents in that regard.

6. With support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and civil society, the Government was

working on a draft bill to strengthen the institutional framework for the promotion of positive discipline in child-rearing. It had also recently approved a bill to amend the civil code in order to eliminate underage marriage with parental consent. A road map for the prevention and elimination of violence against children was being implemented with a view to building synergies between the relevant parties and avoiding leaving any child behind. The Government would continue to strengthen its social policies to establish a comprehensive care and protection system for children, their families and communities, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

7. **Ms. Sorto Rosales** (El Salvador) said that his country had made significant progress in children's education, health and protection. The Government had implemented a law for the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents, which aligned with the international framework for human rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The general law on youth had been amended in 2016 to improve the effectiveness of the national institute for youth and to incorporate more inclusive and participatory language in youth policies. Under the "Ciudad Mujer" programme, a subprogramme was dedicated to girls between the ages of 13 and 18 years, as well as girls between the ages of 9 and 12 years who had suffered sexual violence or early pregnancy, with a view to increasing their empowerment and development opportunities. Additionally, children had access to comprehensive health care in their first years of life. As a result, chronic malnutrition had been reduced by 42 per cent in first graders since 2007, and mother-to-child transmission of HIV had been reduced. Furthermore, in September 2017, the family code had been amended to prohibit child marriage. The complex issue of child and adolescent migrants required a human rights-based approach that focused on the best interests of the child, rather than detention and deportation. Countries of origin, transit and destination should work together to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, especially unaccompanied children and adolescents, regardless of their immigration status.

8. **Mr. Wickramarachige** (Sri Lanka) said that Sri Lanka had successfully incorporated the core norms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into its legal system, guaranteeing children's rights to nationality and non-discrimination. The highest court of law had upheld the principle that the best interests of the child were paramount in legal proceedings, including custody hearings. In 2013, the National Child Protection Policy had been introduced to elevate national child protection

standards to the level defined in the Convention and its Optional Protocols. A national monitoring committee had identified gaps in the implementation of the Convention and proposed action to the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs. The national action plan 2017–2019 on preventing sexual and gender-based violence contained a section on the girl child, and the Government had also approved a separate action plan on the prevention of child abuse.

9. Sri Lanka was one of the few countries that had enacted laws prohibiting bullying in schools. Nevertheless, parents and teachers must play a role in its prevention. In April 2017, Sri Lanka had met with other Buddhist States to identify ways of preventing violence against children, including online abuse and sexual exploitation. They had discussed opportunities for Buddhist leaders to use their authority and influence to raise awareness within their communities to help break the silence surrounding violence against children and provide support to victims. Sri Lanka was committed to mobilizing leaders across Asia to ensure that temples and communities were safe spaces for children, where victims could heal and be reintegrated into society.

10. **Ms. von Ernst** (Iceland) said that her country kept children's rights at the heart of its policies and urged all States to become parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Through strong investments in youth, especially in education, the international community could create a platform for new generations to lead global efforts to set the world on a course to a more sustainable future. Free and universal education was crucial to social equality and long-term prosperity. In order to meet Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ensure access to inclusive and equitable quality education for all, the international community must work together to strengthen the political profile of education, ensure awareness for children's human rights and systematically focus on girls and their empowerment. Iceland remained deeply concerned about the state of children's human rights. In regions where political violence and armed conflict were common, millions of displaced children risked abuse, neglect, exploitation, violence, trafficking, forced military recruitment and separation from their families. Iceland therefore firmly supported Goal 16 to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. Governments had a responsibility to ensure that children's rights were respected, protected and fulfilled, regardless of the challenges that they faced.

11. **Mr. Arslan** (Indonesia) said that States should prioritize investment in children's health and education and promote measures for children's empowerment to enable them to reach their full potential. In Indonesia,

children made up 34 per cent of the population. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Indonesia was committed to combating violence against children and addressing its contributing factors, for which a comprehensive and holistic approach was needed. In order to protect children from exploitation in child labour, the Government had established a national action plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, had created a child labour reduction programme to provide education and vocational training to children, and had launched a programme to establish child-labour-free zones in industrial areas across the country. Additional laws had been enacted to protect children from violence and all forms of discrimination, including laws governing citizenship, human trafficking and juvenile justice. There was also a national movement to combat sexual crimes against children.

12. Furthermore, Indonesia had taken measures to improve family welfare and economic resilience and to increase investments in health and education. Education was free and compulsory for 12 years with a view to encouraging children to stay in school and reducing child marriage. The Government was working to establish child-friendly schools, playgrounds and cities; designate safe routes to school; and provide child-friendly access to information and technology. Children's forums, family learning centres and creative spaces were being established in all provinces to encourage children's participation in social activities and development planning.

13. **Ms. Choden** (Bhutan) said that her country remained committed to ensuring that all children in Bhutan thrived in a safe and progressive environment free from violence. Children were critical agents of change, and investment in their rights was fundamental to an inclusive and sustainable society. The Government had therefore undertaken several measures to promote and protect those rights. Education was free for all children until the tenth grade, after which access was based on merit. The Constitution included provisions to protect children from discrimination and exploitation, including trafficking, prostitution, abuse, violence, degrading treatment and economic exploitation. Laws on childcare and adoption had been enacted to further strengthen the national legal framework. In addition, the definition of violence against children in existing legislation had been expanded, and penalties for such crimes had been increased. The national plan of action for child protection had been incorporated in the current five-year plan. Child focal points had been appointed in all government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to mainstream children's rights in all policies and plans. In 2015, a children's parliament

had been established to engage children in the electoral process and promote their participation in democracy and policymaking. The new five-year plan, to be adopted in 2018, would include four key areas that were specific to children and their development.

14. Bhutan had submitted its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in May 2017 and was working to ensure that the Committee's recommendations received the highest priority. It would continue to work with the international community to ensure that children remained at the centre of its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. **Mr. Shakirov** (Kazakhstan) said that the safety and security of children were essential to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in conflict zones, and must be given consideration under all of the Sustainable Development Goals. In times of peace and in conflict, States must invest in development, provide better living conditions, create jobs and meet the socioeconomic needs of their people. In conflict zones, States must implement action plans for sustainable, long-term rehabilitation and the reintegration of children and child soldiers, especially girls. Educational and vocational training, adequate psychological support and trauma counselling must be available to ensure that former child soldiers were treated as victims rather than security threats. Greater coordination between United Nations bodies, peacekeeping operations and mechanisms related to armed conflict was required to employ a comprehensive and streamlined approach. In the case of mass refugee flows, States of origin, transit and destination must be held accountable for fulfilling their obligations to uphold children's rights.

16. Every effort should be made to protect schools, hospitals and humanitarian facilities from attacks. Kazakhstan had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and called on parties to conflicts to uphold the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. Furthermore, parties must refrain from aerial bombing, ground operations and the use of explosive weapons, which caused unspeakable destruction. In order to protect children affected by war, Security Council resolution [1261 \(1999\)](#) must be implemented, with the assistance of monitoring and reporting mechanisms and the relevant Security Council sanctions committees. Targeted sanctions must be imposed on perpetrators of crimes against children, and children and youth must be protected from recruitment by terrorist organizations. Governments and armed groups must also develop and implement time-bound action plans pursuant to Security Council resolution [2143 \(2014\)](#).

17. Kazakhstan had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2011, had introduced legal measures to prohibit persons under the age of 18 years from being enlisted or used as mercenaries and had strengthened the national criminal code.

18. **Ms. Shao Wu** (China) said that international efforts to promote and protect the rights of children had made good progress, owing to the continuous efforts of the international community, national governments and civil society; however, in many parts of the world, poverty, hunger, disease, natural disasters, child labour, drugs, sexual violation, war and conflicts still threatened those rights. With approximately 280 million children, China had one of the largest child populations in the world. The Government therefore attached great importance to the protection of children's rights and had implemented a national action plan for child development, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The National People's Congress had adopted the thirteenth five-year plan on economic and social development, with a section devoted to the healthy development of minors. Furthermore, legislation, regulations and programmes had been implemented on domestic violence, preschool education, nutrition and safeguards for vulnerable children.

19. China supported the role of the United Nations and civil society in strengthening and promoting the protection of children's rights. Developed countries must increase financial and technical assistance to developing countries in order to foster more favourable conditions for the development of children globally. In that regard, the Government was assisting developing countries in implementing health projects for women and children and was providing financial assistance for education to girls living in poverty. China would continue to fulfil its international obligations, play an active role in international cooperation and collaborate with the international community to achieve a world fit for children.

20. **Mr. Mangisi** (Tonga) said that all forms of child abuse were criminalized in Tonga, from corporal punishment to physical, sexual and mental abuse; however, the success of those laws was dependent upon implementation by the Government and awareness at the community level. Tonga was working to complete its second report under the universal periodic review, which would highlight its progress in protecting children's rights. In 2013, the right to receive quality, inclusive education had been enshrined in law. A project sponsored by Uniting World supported the development of early childhood education by providing teacher

training and educational resources to schools. Good data collection to monitor child development was essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In collaboration with the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education, Tonga had established a strong monitoring system and conducted a national census on child development.

21. Climate change had a negative impact on children in Tonga, a small island developing State. The Government continued to promote awareness of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction by incorporating climate change issues in school curricula and had recently held a three-day national climate change awareness campaign. Tonga remained committed to protecting children from circumstances that would impede their rights and to ensuring a safer and more secure environment for their upbringing.

22. **Ms. Kipiani** (Georgia) said that Georgia had ratified the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure in 2016 and had enacted a juvenile justice code. Several laws had been amended to allow children living or working on the streets to obtain identification documentation, thereby facilitating access to education, health care, social security and other public services. The Committee had considered the fourth periodic report of Georgia in January 2017. As per the universal periodic review recommendations, an interagency commission on children's rights had been established, which benefited from the active involvement of the Ombudsman, UNICEF and several NGOs. In 2016, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had visited Georgia, and her valuable recommendations were given due consideration in the implementation of national policies.

23. In the occupied regions of Georgia, the humanitarian and human rights situation was deteriorating. The violence and discrimination that many children faced daily hindered their development. Owing to the complete absence of international monitoring mechanisms, children were being deprived of their basic human rights. Education in the Georgian language had been fully restricted in Abkhazia, and a similar process had been initiated in Tskhinvali and South Ossetia. Moreover, the closing of so-called crossing points along the occupation line in Abkhazia had severely worsened the humanitarian situation on the ground and further restricted the freedom of movement of local populations, including schoolchildren. The Sustainable Development Goals must apply to people living in conflict areas and those who had been forcibly displaced. Respect for children's rights was essential to a peaceful and strong society. Georgia was therefore

committed to advancing the rights of children and ensuring a better future for young generations.

24. **Mr. Mohammad** (Kuwait) said that, under the resolution “a world fit for children”, Governments had made time-bound commitments to promote a healthy lifestyle, provide quality education, combat HIV/AIDS and protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence. Despite the progress that had been made, many steps remained to be taken. There were over 500 million children living in States affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters and epidemics. The 2030 Agenda presented a unique opportunity to promote and protect children’s rights, given that all of the Sustainable Development Goals impacted the lives of children in the short or long term.

25. Under the Constitution of Kuwait, the family was the basis of society and was founded on religion, morality and patriotism. The Constitution also stipulated that the State should provide children with spiritual, physical and moral support and that education was one of the basic pillars for the advancement of society. In addition to its international obligations as contained in instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, Kuwait had enacted national legislation concerning the family and children. In 2015, Kuwait had enacted a law establishing a family court, which contained a number of articles on how family disputes should be addressed so as to minimize the impact on children. A law on the rights of the child was a comprehensive piece of legislation that gave children the right to a cohesive family environment, as well as the rights to education and health. Kuwait had held the first regional conference on the protection of children and youth from the risks of social media and would also host forthcoming conferences on education in Somalia, as well as the suffering of Palestinian children and the continued violations of their rights at the hands of Israeli occupation authorities.

26. **Mr. Uğurluoğlu** (Turkey) said that the Government had taken several steps to improve the legal and institutional framework to safeguard and improve the well-being of children. The current national strategy and action plan on children’s rights had identified targets in health, education and social inclusion. A consultative board had been established to prepare the new action plan, which would include a focus on awareness-raising. The Government prioritized inclusive educational opportunities, as well as closing the gender gap in all spheres of life for girls. Turkey was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two Optional Protocols and had signed the third Optional Protocol in 2012.

27. Children around the world continued to be disproportionately impacted by mass abductions, torture and sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the restriction of humanitarian access. The international community must therefore display strong political will and take concerted action to address the situation of children in armed conflicts. For its part, Turkey would continue to support their well-being through comprehensive humanitarian and development assistance programmes. Given that large movements of migrants and refugees across borders created further impediments to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, the international community must redouble its efforts to address the needs of displaced children. There were 3.3 million displaced persons living in Turkey, including 3.1 million Syrians. Approximately 835,000 school-aged Syrian children lived in Turkey, 60 per cent of whom attended school in 2017, owing to a robust campaign to encourage their re-enrolment. Despite efforts to meet the growing needs of Syrian children, especially in the fields of education and health care, new schools and additional teachers were urgently needed. The international community must act in conformity with the principles of responsibility and burden-sharing to ensure the education of Syrian children, as they would be the ones to rebuild the country.

28. The Government took the necessary measures to prevent the trafficking of all children that had sought safety and security in the country. Those measures were implemented by the relevant Turkish authorities in cooperation with international partners. Turkey rejected the baseless allegations of the representative of the Syrian regime, which had long ago lost its legitimacy, and would continue to stand by the Syrian children who suffered from the destruction it had caused.

29. **Mr. Adejola** (Nigeria) said that, as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nigeria had enshrined children’s rights in the Constitution and in national legislation. A number of initiatives had been implemented to protect children. A national campaign to end violence against children had been incorporated into programmes at internally displaced persons camps, where alleged cases of sexual exploitation had been reported by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons. In response, a government investigation team had visited the camps where alleged perpetrators and victims had been interviewed. The Government had deployed civil defence personnel and social workers to the camps to monitor the situation and arrest any potential perpetrators of sexual exploitation. It had also implemented measures to ensure that children in

internally displaced persons camps had access to adequate, quality education.

30. The Government had conducted a national survey on violence against children, the first of its kind in West Africa. Based on the results, awareness-raising campaigns had been launched to educate parents, families and communities on the importance of protecting children from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse, including abduction and early and forced marriage. Furthermore, the Government had begun to implement the provisions of a law that criminalized and prohibited all forms of child abuse, including female genital mutilation and abandonment, and a national joint task force for the prevention of child sexual abuse had been set up to bring perpetrators to justice. In 2016, the Government had launched a campaign to end child marriage and keep girls in school until the age of 18 years, which was expected to have a positive impact on the high prevalence of vesico-vaginal fistula and the maternal mortality rate.

31. **Ms. Mohamed Didi** (Maldives) said that the Government had continued initiatives to train parents and professionals working with children to identify the early warning signs of child abuse. As a result, the number of reported cases had significantly increased in recent years. Nevertheless, many cases of violence, abuse and mistreatment still went unreported. In order to improve access to protective services, family and children service centres had been established across the 19 atolls. A mobile reporting application and a 24-hour toll-free call centre had also been created to allow anonymous reporting, and innovative technologies had facilitated reporting and increased the number of reports made by children. Furthermore, community social groups, comprised of key stakeholders, were being established across the State to improve response time. Given that violence against children and gender-based violence often overlapped, women's empowerment could play a crucial role in protecting both girls and boys. Recent laws to prevent domestic violence and combat human trafficking had also strengthened protections for children against abuse.

32. The Maldives employed an integrated and holistic approach to the protection of children's rights. In August 2017, the Government had launched a national action plan to end violence against children, which reflected the perspective of children and had been endorsed by all stakeholders. It had made significant efforts to ensure equal access to education, regardless of gender or socioeconomic status. Education was free at the primary and secondary levels, and every student received free textbooks, exercise books and educational

materials. Local and international exams were also administered free of charge.

33. **Mr. Ali** (Pakistan) said that growing inequalities continued to deprive the poorest and most excluded children of essential services, despite the progress made over recent years. The special session on children, held in 2002, had reflected the international commitment to protect and promote the rights of children beyond nationalities, ethnicities and religions. That commitment was essential to removing obstacles for the proper implementation of relevant laws and conventions. Pakistan had been one of the earliest signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and had ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2016. Pakistan had also ratified all International Labour Organization conventions on child labour.

34. The Government was fully committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals to improve children's health and education, address malnutrition, end violence, eradicate poverty and reduce inequality. A national commission for child welfare and development, working in close collaboration with UNICEF, had been established to monitor and promote children's rights, and a comprehensive bill on child protection was under consideration to provide legal safeguards against exploitation and abuse. The child-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals complemented some of Pakistan's own development priorities, which included reducing infant and maternal mortality, achieving universal primary school enrolment and completion and improving overall literacy to 90 per cent within the next eight years.

35. **Ms. Poenateetai** (Thailand) said that the 2030 Agenda had provided a comprehensive and integrated framework to promote equitable and inclusive societies for all children. Attention should therefore be focused on marginalized groups, such as rural and migrant children and those living in poverty. Thailand had been working to ensure the respect and protection of children's rights since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and had recently made progress under several of the Sustainable Development Goals. In line with Goal 3, Thailand had achieved universal health coverage in 2002 and was committed to ensuring good health and well-being for all. In 2015, the Government had introduced a child-support grant to provide financial assistance to poor families with newborns. In September 2017, it had passed a law to regulate the marketing of foods for infants and young children, which aligned with the World Health

Organization International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. In line with Goal 4, all children, including migrant children, would receive a 12-year quality education that was free and compulsory under the 2017 Constitution. In line with Goal 16, the Government had launched a campaign to raise awareness of violence against children in 2015, in collaboration with UNICEF.

36. States must strengthen the role and participation of children in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and in upholding their human rights. The Government provided several platforms for children and youth to voice their opinions. In preparing its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention, children and young people in Thailand had been able to submit their own reports to the Committee with a view to sharing their situations and providing policy recommendations. Since 2007, Thailand had included youth delegates in its official delegation to the United Nations, and children contributed to policies, plans and budgets through the National Child and Youth Council.

37. Given the growing role of media and technology, States must take responsibility to minimize the risks of exploitation and abuse for children. In 2015, Thailand had amended the criminal code to provide wider, more effective legal protections for children against sexual exploitation, including on the Internet. In 2017, the five-year national strategy to protect children and youth in the use of online media had been approved with a view to preventing online abuse and violence against children, including cyberbullying.

38. **Mr. Ntonga** (Zimbabwe) said that his country had prioritized children's rights, as enshrined in the Constitution, by passing several pieces of legislation on children, education and domestic violence and by acceding to international instruments. Several child protection programmes had been established to promote victim-friendly services in police stations, clinics and courts in order to prevent and respond to cases of violence and sexual abuse in children. As a result, many victims now felt comfortable reporting abuses to the authorities. Collaboration with stakeholders had also led to a dramatic increase in the number of reported child abuse cases. However, the implementation and enforcement of those progressive legislative reforms was impeded by limited resources and institutional capacity and prevailing social, cultural and political norms.

39. The major drivers of forced and early marriage were religious and traditional beliefs and practices that were not consistent with the rights of children as

enshrined in the Constitution. In January 2016, the practice had been banned, and it was currently illegal to marry a girl under the age of 18 years. The Government was aligning all marriage laws to the Constitution that had been approved in 2013, standardizing definitions of the age of consent across all legislation and closing legal loopholes that had allowed culprits to escape punishment. Nevertheless, it was difficult to investigate violations when victims were uncooperative or reluctant to turn in close relatives, often parents. Zimbabwe had therefore developed a national action plan and communication strategy to coordinate efforts to end child marriage and to raise awareness of its negative effects. The strategy stressed that child marriage was a violation of the law governing domestic violence, caused educational opportunities to be lost and led to health-related concerns, such as obstetric fistula.

40. **Ms. Elmansouri** (Tunisia) said that international cooperation was essential to achieving more concrete results in combating violence, exploitation and abuse of children, in particular girls. Tunisia had undertaken several initiatives to promote children's participation and protection. In 2016, a law had been adopted to prevent and combat human trafficking, which highlighted the vulnerability of children to economic or sexual exploitation, especially by criminal groups and in armed conflict. A law to combat violence against women, adopted in July 2017, provided protections for the interests of children victims of sexual violence and stressed the need to provide them with psychological and social assistance. Tunisia sought to strengthen its judicial framework for the protection of children by acceding to international and regional instruments and was in the process of acceding to the third Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

41. With regard to education, \$34 million had been allocated to improve conditions in schools, which included building and repairing infirmaries, in particular in rural and border areas. The Government has established an office to provide support for school-related services, which had provided 500,000 students with school lunches for the 2016–2017 school year. A partnership agreement had been developed to combat dropout and failure rates, which targeted 34 schools in the 19 governorates with the highest attrition rates. Tunisia also adopted measures to strengthen children's participation in the development of public policies. Several regional workshops had been held in collaboration with UNICEF to allow children to develop



and publish their proposals for the 2016–2020 five-year development plan.

42. **Ms. Flores Herrera** (Panama) said that children must be granted the right to receive information, form opinions and actively contribute to dialogue. Panama had made significant progress in promoting children's rights. The National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family had launched campaigns to combat and eradicate sexual abuse and urged parents and teachers to safeguard the integrity of children. Furthermore, several government institutions had come together to launch a campaign to eradicate child labour, and Executive Decree 19 had been amended to update the list of jobs that were considered dangerous for minors. As a result, the number of child workers had been significantly reduced. The international community must raise awareness of all forms of violence against children and strengthen collaboration. Panama had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure and reiterated its commitment to the well-being of all children and its determination to help them develop their full potential.

43. **Mr. Kayinamura** (Rwanda) said that Governments and the international community must achieve the goals of the special session on children. As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Rwanda had made strong commitments to protect and promote children's rights. Under the strategic plan for children, which determined the guiding principles, every child in Rwanda was important to the Government, without discrimination. Every action that affected children, whether undertaken by the Government or non-governmental parties, must be preceded by an assessment of its impact. The overall objective of the strategic plan was to guarantee the rights of children to survival, protection and development through improved access to quality services and strengthened institutions and systems. In 2012, the Government had made a strong commitment to improve orphanages and provide children with family-based care to ensure the promotion of positive social values and their right to family. In education, primary school was free, and enrolment had reached 95.4 per cent, with 96.5 per cent of girls attending.

44. **Mr. Ahsan** (Bangladesh) said that the Constitution guaranteed the rights of children, and the necessary laws and policies were in place to fulfil the country's international obligations. The rights of children could best be protected by ensuring access to education and health care. Since 2010, the Government had delivered free, new textbooks to children of all levels, distributing 360 million textbooks in 2017. With a focus on quality

education, the Government was funding schools and prioritizing the welfare of teachers. Furthermore, the education system focused on fostering creativity; ICT had been incorporated in the curriculum, beginning in primary school; and digital classrooms had been established in schools around the country in order to realize the Vision 2021 of a digital Bangladesh. In the past 10 years, there had been significant improvements in child health, owing to a more holistic and sector-wide approach. Health services were provided through mobile phones and a 24-hour web portal to complement the work of more than 16,000 community and local health clinics that were able to treat children. Additionally, the education and health needs of children with disabilities also received proper attention. The international community must complement the efforts of developing countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals pertaining to children. Bangladesh was undertaking efforts to integrate a child's perspective and consideration for their rights in the pursuit of world peace and had recently participated in the General Assembly High-level Forum on the Culture of Peace, which had focused on early childhood development.

45. Over the past several weeks, a humanitarian catastrophe had been unfolding in Bangladesh, where more than half a million Myanmar nationals had been forcibly displaced. According to United Nations estimates, 60 per cent of those displaced were children, and approximately 1,600 were without a guardian. While Bangladesh extended as much support to them as possible, their situation continued to deteriorate. The international community must therefore fulfil its obligations under the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and ensure that those children enjoyed special protection, that their suffering was redressed and that they were returned to their families as soon as possible.

46. **Archbishop Auza** (Observer for the Holy See) said that there had been unprecedented migration in the past several years, a phenomenon that was growing even faster among children. Unaccompanied children lacked proper documentation and the means to protect themselves and had no adult guardian to speak on their behalf. As a result, they were often subjected to the lowest levels of human degradation, and the international community struggled to break up the network of child abuse. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, States parties had a legal obligation to protect the best interests of children through measures such as proper identification and registration, the designation of a guardian or custodian for legal representation, and the protection of their rights to education and health care. Throughout the world, the

Holy See and the Catholic Church had always sought to welcome, protect and integrate those who fled from adverse conditions, in particular children, through the promotion of family tracing and reunification, education, advocacy and public awareness. In addition to assisting migrant children, its programmes were designed to combat the root causes of forced or involuntary displacement. Violations of children's rights in armed conflict had increased in intensity and scale. The Holy See and the Catholic Church had therefore been working with the United Nations to oppose the use of children as combatants and reintegrate them into society.

47. **Ms. Bhengu** (South Africa) said that States had made significant progress in improving the enjoyment of the rights of children. However, progress in the global South had varied by State and, in many cases, required international cooperation. Her delegation therefore wished to recall Sustainable Development Goal 17 to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. In 2010, stunting had affected more than 79 million children in the world, the majority living in Africa. Since then, various reports by the Secretary-General had indicated a decrease in those numbers. A collective effort was therefore necessary to continue that positive trajectory. Within States, the promotion and protection of children's rights was inconsistent, owing to inequalities in household incomes, wealth distribution and the provision of quality services in rural and urban areas.

48. South Africa had continued to prioritize children's needs through various legislative, administrative and judicial measures. Adequate budgetary resources had been allocated to education, and girls had attained 98 per cent school enrolment. The social security safety net had also played an important role in ensuring the rights of children. A child-support grant, which covered indigent children until the age of 18 years, had reached 70 per cent of households. Nevertheless, South Africa still faced many challenges. A number of children, especially those living in low-income communities, were being exposed to or felt the effects of substance abuse. Her delegation therefore requested that future reports on the rights of the child should elaborate on that issue and provide guidance or best practices on the ways in which communities and families could be effectively supported to address substance abuse and its negative impact on children.

49. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that, as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, two of its Optional Protocols and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Burundi had made significant

efforts to protect and promote children's rights. In addition to the legal framework, the Government had established national committees to coordinate child protection and eliminate the worst forms of child labour, had created a legal protection unit within the Ministry of Justice and had designated chambers in district courts for minors in conflict with the law and victims of sexual violence. Detention conditions for children had been improved with the addition of two re-education centres for minors in conflict with the law, and a specialized police unit had been created to protect at-risk minors. The Government had also established a national children's forum and child protection committees at the provincial and local levels. Furthermore, policies and programmes had been adopted to improve the well-being of vulnerable children, including orphans, children in institutions and street children. The Government had developed a 2016–2020 sectoral policy to reform the criminal justice system for minors and was implementing and strengthening working groups on various issues related to child protection.

50. Burundi had accomplished those achievements in a difficult post-conflict setting. Child protection was hindered by the number of vulnerable children, poor households, epidemics, malnutrition in children under the age of five years, high infant and child mortality rates and insufficient resources. Burundi reaffirmed its commitment to implement international and regional instruments and called on the European Union to lift the unilateral economic sanctions hastily imposed on the State, which negatively impacted vulnerable groups in general, and children in particular.

51. *Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland), Chair, took the Chair.*

52. **Ms. Al Jabri** (United Arab Emirates) said that the United Arab Emirates promoted children's rights at the national, regional and international levels. The Government had adopted a strategy to fulfil the aspirations of women and children, who were the foundation of prosperity and development, and the Ministry of the Interior had established a centre to protect children. The United Arab Emirates had been appointed to chair the Virtual Global Taskforce to eradicate the sexual exploitation of children online from 2016 to 2018 and had acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2016. The Government accorded great importance to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and had prioritized the need to foster children's potential in the country's Vision 2021. Policies were being revised to ensure that children were free from discrimination and received proper attention in the judicial system. In 2016, the Government had passed a child protection law that

strengthened their socioeconomic, cultural and educational rights and outlined penalties for violations. A five-year strategic plan had also been developed to promote the rights of children with disabilities.

53. The United Arab Emirates was collaborating with UNICEF to save lives and protect disadvantaged women and children in Yemen. It had delivered \$2.3 billion to 4 million women and children, and more than half a million children had been immunized. International efforts to protect children from radicalism and terrorism would not be successful unless the international community took into consideration the humanitarian repercussions of terrorism in the region. The Government had therefore adopted national legislation in accordance with international law to protect women, children and youth from incitement and hate speech. The United Arab Emirates would continue to cooperate with its partners and international bodies to protect children's rights in all circumstances.

54. **Mr. Bastida** (Spain) said that Spain had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its three Optional Protocols and had submitted its fifth and sixth periodic reports to the Committee in 2016. In April 2017, the Casa Árabe in Madrid had hosted an international consultation for the Mediterranean region on the joint general comment of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The event had been organized by UNICEF Spain, in collaboration with the Spanish Government.

55. Spain had one of the most comprehensive social and legal protection systems for children, in which no distinction was made between citizens and foreigners. The Government had taken several measures to promote children's rights, which included a programme for family protection and child poverty, under which €100 million would be spent on projects to support poor families and minors and to provide basic social services. With regard to violence against children, a new child protection system had been approved through legislative reforms in 2015. It included a toll-free number for victims of bullying in schools, a bill concerning comprehensive protection from violence, a strategic plan to promote coexistence in schools, and laws on gender identity and non-discrimination that included specific mentions of transsexual minors. The Government also provided education and training on positive parenting to support good practices.

56. **Mr. Dzonzi** (Malawi) said that, as a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,

among others, Malawi had taken steps to incorporate regional and international instruments into its national legislation by enhancing the legal framework and improving the capacity of relevant government institutions. The Government had adopted a policy on early childhood development, as well as five-year national plans on human rights development and vulnerable children.

57. In order to promote gender equality and girls' access to development opportunities, the Constitution had been amended in 2017 to update the definition of a child and raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years. The Government had also improved collaboration with traditional leaders and other stakeholders, with the support of United Nations agencies, to end child marriage. As a result, the number of child marriages had been reduced by 5 per cent in 2016. In an effort to end violence against children, local authorities instituted relevant by-laws in their communities. The Government had established child justice courts, a child helpline and hospital-based centres to assist children who were victims of abuse. Furthermore, a national registration programme, which included mandatory birth registration, had been implemented to prevent child trafficking.

58. In order to address the challenges of HIV/AIDS, which contributed to a significant number of child-headed households, Malawi had aligned its 2015–2020 national strategic plan on HIV/AIDS to the 90-90-90 target. As a result, new HIV infections among children under the age of 15 years had declined by 84 per cent since 2000, to 4,300 in 2016. A high-level task force had been established to oversee the implementation of the newly developed strategy for adolescent girls and young women, which sought to address the social, cultural and economic factors that increased their vulnerability to HIV.

59. **Ms. Haidour** (Morocco) said that the Government had taken a number of measures to fulfil its national and international commitments to protect the rights of children, who were the most vulnerable in society. Morocco had begun the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. In 2014, the Committee on the Rights of the Child had examined its third and fourth periodic reports and its initial report on the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Committee had highlighted the progress made by Morocco, particularly in terms of legislation such as the nationality code and the family code; its gradual accession to several Council of Europe conventions; the withdrawal of its reservation to article 14, paragraph 1, of the Convention; and constitutional

amendments that acknowledged the primacy of international conventions over national laws.

60. The Government had taken several steps to improve the education system and ensure access. As a result, the enrolment rate had increased to more than 94 per cent, from approximately 50 per cent in 1998. A number of reforms had been passed to promote and protect children's rights within the framework of the 2006–2015 national plan of action for children, which had been developed in accordance with the United Nations Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children". Additionally, a national recourse mechanism for child victims of human rights violations was being established with the help of UNICEF.

61. **Ms. Hwang Yoosil** (Republic of Korea) said that access to education for children was essential for individual empowerment, sustainable development, poverty reduction, economic growth and a peaceful and inclusive society. As children were often on the front lines of conflict and frequently the victims of extremism, it was important to educate them in universal values such as human dignity, tolerance, respect for diversity and human rights. The Republic of Korea had hosted the World Education Forum in 2015 and the Annual Conference of the Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations on global citizenship education in 2016. Furthermore, it had launched the Group of Friends on Global Citizenship Education in June 2017.

62. The international community must devote greater effort to protecting girls and helping them to realize their potential, as societies that empowered girls and young women achieved better results in development. The Republic of Korea therefore promoted global programmes to support their health, education and vocational training. A cooperative approach was essential to the promotion and protection of children's rights, and the Republic of Korea would continue to do its part as it worked to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and create a better and safer world for the next generation.

63. **Mr. Mendoza-García** (Costa Rica) said that all States must find sustainable, multidimensional solutions to protect the rights of children, in particular the most vulnerable. Early childhood interventions were essential and required a cross-sectoral approach to guarantee safe and protective environments and access to health, nutrition and protection services. In Costa Rica, children were guaranteed universal access to services. In March 2017, the Government had launched an action plan for its early childhood policy in order to meet the needs of children from birth until eight years of age. The plan

also aimed to promote healthy, planned pregnancies and provide services for genetic analysis to prevent disorders and deficiencies.

64. Costa Rica had also achieved universal preschool. As at 2018, two years of preschool would be required to enter primary school with a view to benefiting children from low-income families. Young people with more education were more likely to delay marriage and parenthood, and their children would be healthier and better educated. By providing young people with the necessary tools to improve their lives and encouraging them to participate in initiatives to improve conditions in their communities, States were investing in strengthening societies. To address teen pregnancy and child marriage, a new law had been passed to prohibit underage unions and marriages, with a sentence of up to three years in prison for perpetrators. Furthermore, the Government had implemented a national action plan to develop strategies to prevent and eradicate violence against children and adolescents, which called for joint action from families, communities and educators and promoted a culture of peace and civic coexistence.

65. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica) said that the Government was actively working to achieve Goal 16, target 2, on the elimination of all forms of violence against children. In 2016, Jamaica had joined the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children as a pathfinder country. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information had hosted a consultation to review and update the national plan of action for an integrated response to children and violence, which was underpinned by a holistic, rights-based approach that was focused on resolving the challenges children faced as victims, perpetrators and witnesses of violence in all forms. Appropriate measures must be implemented to protect children from all forms of violence, including bullying. Nearly 1 billion children worldwide were subjected to physical punishment by their caregivers on a regular basis. The Government prohibited corporal punishment for children in places of safety and early childhood institutions and had developed alternative systems of discipline and behaviour management.

66. An effective and efficient child protection system was indispensable to the promotion and protection of children's rights. The Government was modernizing the child protection sector and had developed a case management system that would allow information to be shared electronically among key actors in the childcare and social protection sector. Education had a transformational impact on girls. It was therefore important to reintegrate school-aged mothers into a formal school setting to ensure that they were not denied opportunities of empowerment and self-sufficiency,

thereby minimizing their risk of becoming victims of trafficking, prostitution and sexual abuse.

67. His delegation wished to emphasize the need for greater opportunities to exchange views, experiences and best practices among Member States, in particular on the importance of international cooperation in fulfilling obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To that end, Jamaica would continue to work assiduously and in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders to safeguard the future of its children.

68. **Mr. Abdelwahed** (Libya) said that Libya was committed to meeting its obligations to protect human rights under international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two Optional Protocols, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Charter on the Rights of the Arab Child. The Government protected the rights of children, which it defined as all individuals under the age of 16 years, including foetuses, and guaranteed the full enjoyment of those rights, including the rights to education, housing, drinking water, nutrition and freedom from all forms of violence. Children who were impacted by the crisis in Libya, including forcibly displaced children and children with disabilities, were given special attention. Terrorism and armed conflicts must be eliminated, and peace and security must be maintained in order for children to achieve their ambitions. The international community had an obligation to ensure that children affected by conflict received an education. Despite the current challenges, the Government was determined to provide free education and health care. In cooperation with UNICEF, the Government sought to overcome obstacles and align national legislation with international standards and the tenets of Islam. Since 2011, the Government had provided polio vaccinations to more than 1.3 million children. Nevertheless, the continued crisis, the lack of stability and the total economic collapse had affected vital sectors in Libya, and 87 per cent of children had not been vaccinated.

69. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that, in May 2017, the Government had approved a national strategy on the protection of human rights, which included a section on children's rights. As a signatory of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, Armenia allowed children to bring complaints directly to the Committee. Furthermore, the Government was developing a strategic plan on children's rights for the period 2018 to 2021, and a department for the protection of children's rights had been established under the office of the Ombudsman, which was tasked with addressing

shortcomings in the legal system and monitoring complaints regarding violations of those rights.

70. Her delegation welcomed the plan of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to establish capacity to enhance synergies among different United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations and international and local NGOs. Systematic and gross violations of human rights, the use of force and economic coercion, a lack of international protection and the denial of humanitarian access were some of the main factors heavily affecting children's right to life. Armenia was committed to working with all partners towards making the world free from violence against children.

71. **Ms. Abushawesh** (Observer for Palestine) said that millions of children affected by war and armed conflict continued to be the victims of appalling human rights violations and were forced to live in fear, hunger, poverty, isolation and despair. The children of Palestine continued to suffer under the foreign occupation. Generations of children had been traumatized by decades of human rights violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power. In the past year, the situation had deteriorated in all aspects, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where children continued to be tormented by the illegal and immoral 10-year blockade imposed as a collective punishment on the entire population. There were also continued violations of children's right to life throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, where Israeli occupying forces and illegal settlers killed and injured children with impunity. Her delegation therefore called for all perpetrators of crimes against Palestinian children to be held accountable and brought to justice. Palestinian children also suffered from indirect violence, as home demolitions and forced evictions carried out by the Israeli occupying forces continued to render them homeless and cause long-term psychological problems. Furthermore, the occupying Power continued to violate the Palestinian people's right to education by demolishing or confiscating educational facilities, citing the lack of building permits, despite the knowledge that it was nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain permits from Israel. Israeli officials had recently announced plans to demolish the entire Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar, including the school. Her delegation therefore called on the international community to act immediately to compel Israel to put an end to such violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

72. The Government for Palestine would continue to strive to provide redress to children and their families, with the assistance of relevant United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations. Her delegation called

for increased collective efforts to protect Palestinian children and provide them with assistance and rehabilitation services and ensure their well-being and survival.

73. **Mr. López Lavado** (Andorra) said that Andorra had amended its criminal code in 2014 to criminalize corporal punishment in all settings and had participated in the global conference hosted by the Government of Austria under the theme “Towards childhoods free from corporal punishment” in 2016. A legislative framework was crucial for the protection of children’s rights; however, only 53 States had enacted legislation to prohibit corporal punishment. The number of children affected by bullying and cyberbullying in Andorra had increased in recent years, driven by the introduction of new ICTs and the widespread use of social networks. The national plan for the prevention of bullying 2016–2019 aimed to break the silence around bullying and build the capacity of students and educators to develop preventive strategies and find solutions. The Government would unveil a new law in 2018 for the promotion and respect of the rights of children and youth in order to reinforce existing protection measures and further promote the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Andorra had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in March 2017 and was committed to promoting and guaranteeing the right to education, especially in situations of armed conflict. In 2016, more than 40 per cent of official development assistance had been directed to children, and Andorra had increased its funding to UNICEF.

74. **Mr. Koudougou** (Burkina Faso) said that the Government had made significant legislative, institutional and administrative advances in implementing children’s rights, despite a rapid population growth coupled with weak economic and social indicators and a grim security situation. In 2014, legislation had been adopted to prohibit the sale or prostitution of children and child pornography and to protect children either in conflict with the law or at risk. Since 2015, childbirth and obstetric and neonatal care had been subsidized. Additionally, free health care for children under the age of five years and pregnant women had produced significant results. For the period 2016–2020, the Government had implemented national strategies to prevent child marriage, eliminate female genital mutilation and develop inclusive education. A judicial and institutional framework had been implemented to engage all segments of society in combating all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful cultural practices against children. As a result, there had been progress in health, education, birth registration, nutrition and access to water and sanitation,

as well as in combatting female genital mutilation. The Government had adopted a national social and economic development plan in 2016, which prioritized the full realization of children’s rights, especially in health, education and social protection.

75. Despite the progress made, challenges remained, including inadequate infant and young child feeding practices, persistent infectious and parasitic diseases, a lack of clean water and sanitation, high attrition rates in schools near gold-panning sites, and unhealthy foods that led to malnutrition and diarrhoea. Furthermore, increasing insecurity made children vulnerable in some regions of the State. The international community must help States in the Sahel region combat terrorism and ensure that children were not left to the mercy of terrorist groups. Burkina Faso was committed to overcoming the challenges facing children with support from its technical and financial partners and with the help of UNICEF.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*