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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 26th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 23 October 2017, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Gunnarsson . . . . . (Iceland)  
*later:* Ms. Al-Temimi (Vice-Chair) . . . . . (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

**Agenda item 72: Promotion and protection of human rights** (*continued*)

**(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms** (*continued*) (A/72/127, A/72/128,

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**(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives** (*continued*)

(A/72/279, A/72/281, A/72/322, A/72/322/Corr.1, A/72/382, A/72/394, A/72/493, A/72/498, A/72/556, A/72/580-S/2017/798, A/72/581-S/2017/799, A/72/582-S/2017/800, A/72/583-S/2017/816, A/72/584-S/2017/817, A/72/585-S/2017/818, A/72/586-S/2017/819, A/72/587-S/2017/852, A/C.3/72/11, A/72/588-S/2017/873, A/C.3/72/14 and A/C.3/72/16)

1. **Ms. Elver** (Special Rapporteur on the right to food) said that she was introducing her report (A/72/188) at the end of a dramatic year when the world was facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the establishment of the United Nations. She would produce a follow-up report on the humanitarian system and its response to food crises in natural disasters, including climate-related situations, to be presented to the Human Rights Council in March 2018.

2. In January 2017, she and other United Nations experts had warned, in a communication to the Government of Myanmar, about the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the systematic discrimination against the Rohingya people in northern Rakhine state. More than 500,000 Rohingya had fled to Bangladesh since the launch of an operation by the Myanmar security forces in August 2017. The United Nations needed to take a firm stand in the face of such severe human rights violations.

3. Addressing food insecurity and malnutrition in conflict-affected situations required a conflict-sensitive approach that aligned actions for immediate humanitarian assistance and long-term development.

The longer-term recovery and resilience of conflict-affected countries needed to be enhanced. Long-term policies that addressed the root causes of hunger were essential to avoid the periodic recurrence of famine.

4. **Mr. Forax** (European Union) said that the European Union and its member States, as the main humanitarian aid donor, would continue to address the urgent food security needs in the Syrian Arab Republic. They were deeply concerned by the humanitarian crises in North-Eastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, and had already allocated 1.8 billion euros, representing 80 per cent of the funds received by the United Nations appeal. Famine could be prevented only if people were able to move freely to reach aid and if humanitarian agencies had safe access. He asked what concrete measures could be taken by States to guarantee that food assistance reached the entire population in conflict zones without discrimination and how the international community could assist in ensuring that the maximum available resources were distributed without discrimination and based on needs and vulnerability in accordance with humanitarian principles.

5. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) noted that, in paragraph 92 of her report, the Special Rapporteur had underlined the need for a global convention that gave States and the international community a clear legal mandate to prevent famine and protect the right to adequate food and the need to implement existing legal standards and elaborate on existing international law as it applied to food security. She asked whether it was feasible to create a new binding international agreement in the current context of the flood of international instruments that were pending full and effective implementation.

6. **Ms. Mugaas** (Norway) suggested that the Special Rapporteur should include a reference to the Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises prepared by the Committee on World Food Security. It was stated in the report that policies and actions for short- and long-term conflicts should be coherent with the relevant international instruments, and in that regard, Norway drew attention to the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. Her country agreed that national legislation should provide a framework that enabled States to fulfil their international obligations to ensure adequate food for the population in times of peace and in situations of armed conflict, including by ensuring that national law fully reflected existing international law prohibiting and criminalizing acts leading to famine in situations of armed conflict.

7. **Mr. Habib** (Indonesia) said that his Government had mainstreamed the zero hunger policy of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into its development plan and, in 2015, had allocated approximately \$1.6 million through its social protection programme to a rice subsidy for 15.5 million poor households.

8. His delegation would like to know more about the interdependence of food insecurity and armed conflict and asked for additional information on the recommendation to appoint a special study group to explore the possibility of formulating a legally binding instrument for famine prevention. It reiterated its readiness to continue discussions on preparations for the Special Rapporteur's visit to Indonesia in 2018.

9. **Mr. Castillo Santana** (Cuba) said that the right to food was a fundamental human right and a preventive approach should be taken to avoid hunger in countries or regions in situations of conflict. The full realization of the right to food remained a utopian ideal, given that almost 795 million people were suffering from hunger in the world.

10. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Special Rapporteur should not rely on baseless reports from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and open sources when it came to the humanitarian aid situation in Syria. His delegation was surprised that the Special Rapporteur had ignored the strenuous efforts being made by the Syrian Government in coordination with United Nations agencies and the reports submitted by United Nations development programmes in Syria. The Syrian Government had coordinated the entry of humanitarian convoys and food aid to all areas of the country in line with the humanitarian response plan and had worked with the United Nations Children's Fund to rebuild schools destroyed by terrorists.

11. It was incumbent upon the Special Rapporteur to monitor and document the violations committed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusra Front. Those groups had burned and looted crops, destroyed silos, set fire to bakeries and cut off all means of subsistence in the areas under their control. The Special Rapporteur had also neglected to state the facts about the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the resulting dire food situation there, or about Yemen, where air strikes were carried out by the Saudi-led coalition forces.

12. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) said that, since 2013, the terrorist group Boko Haram had been attacking the most important activities for ensuring the provision of food to the population of Cameroon,

namely, trade and farming. The massive inflow of refugees had also increased the vulnerability of people to hunger, doubling the proportion of people living in food insecurity across the country. Food security in the northernmost part of the country was a top humanitarian priority of Cameroon for 2017, and her Government had taken a number of measures to ensure food security, primarily by facilitating the empowerment of refugees through support for income-generating activities. She asked for more information about the proposed global convention and what key actions could be taken towards its adoption.

13. **Mr. Uğurluoğlu** (Turkey) said that the use of starvation as a weapon of war in current conflicts, such as in the Syrian Arab Republic, was unacceptable and a horrible crime. Noting the Special Rapporteur's recommendation pertaining to the need for a workable early warning system to warn of imminent famine conditions, he asked how the United Nations system could be utilized to establish and run such a system.

14. **Ms. Myo** (Myanmar) said that her Government was committed to a sustainable solution for peace, stability and development for all communities within Rakhine state and would fulfil its commitments until progress and success were achieved. In October 2017, a committee for humanitarian assistance, resettlement and development in Rakhine state had been established for the purposes of ensuring the effective provision of humanitarian aid, coordinating resettlement and rehabilitation efforts and working towards durable peace. The business community in Myanmar had contributed approximately \$12 million to efforts to achieve the committee's goals. Her country remained committed to working with all regional and international partners to address the remaining challenges.

15. **Ms. Elgibreen** (Saudi Arabia) said that it was unfortunate that in her report, the Special Rapporteur had taken information from the tabloid press and had not carefully vetted her sources in accordance with usual United Nations practice. Specifically, the report referred to the deliberate targeting by Saudi Arabia of farms in Yemen during military operations, which was a baseless statement and had no place in such a report. Saudi Arabia had responded to a plea from the legitimate president of Yemen for help in returning stability to the country and protecting it from armed Houthi militias and the forces of the former regime, which had killed women, children and the elderly, blockaded cities and ports and obstructed humanitarian aid.

16. The Special Rapporteur was seemingly unaware that Saudi Arabia had provided huge amounts of aid to countries all over the world. For over two decades, it

had responded to the needs of dozens of countries facing famine, serious poverty, natural disasters and wars. It was the fourth-largest aid donor in the world, and Yemen was the main beneficiary of programmes offered by the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre.

17. **Ms. Elver** (Special Rapporteur on the right to food) said that she had endeavoured to be objective in addressing the issue of the right to food in conflict situations, regardless of the parties to the conflict. In general, she referred to reports of the United Nations and United Nations agencies and did not use information from newspapers or remote non-governmental organizations. She had tried to cite all the reports used; anyone questioning the accuracy of the report should therefore check those references. She had not been able to visit Myanmar, the Syrian Arab Republic or Yemen and had therefore had to rely on information from international organizations.

18. While an international agreement was preferable, there should be at least some kind of guidance to ensure that countries, non-governmental organizations, terrorist organizations and all kinds of networks understood that crimes such as blocking food, besieging innocent people, destroying agriculture and using famine as a weapon of war were crimes against humanity for which they would be held individually responsible. It was currently difficult to establish an international convention given the political situation in every conflict, and she had therefore suggested the establishment of a study group by the Human Rights Council. She had explained what should be included in such a convention in paragraph 92 of her report. It should address root causes and the establishment of an early warning system.

19. The international community must come together to protect civilians, because war took place everywhere, not only inside the war zone. The point should be stressed that it was not possible to stop famine and hunger and it was almost impossible to achieve zero hunger by 2030 mainly because of conflicts, protracted crises and climate-related issues.

20. Owing to the word limit of the report, she had not been able to include all countries, and she would include in her next report those that had not been mentioned.

21. **Ms. Boly Barry** (Special Rapporteur on the right to education), introducing her report (A/72/496), noted the extraordinary efforts made by States to improve education enrolment rates, in particular on the African continent, where the numbers had practically doubled. In her view, it was important to draw a distinction between equity and equality in education. Equality meant treating all students in the same way, whereas equity meant providing every student with what he or

she required to succeed. Equity thus implied inclusivity; the learning environment must meet the needs of students of varying economic and social origins and abilities.

22. In addition to the recommendations contained in her report, addressing the challenges and obstacles faced by children not in school required innovative ideas, capacity-building strategies for teaching and the management of the education system and research to ensure that information was as relevant as possible in responding to specific needs. Although Governments bore primary responsibility for the enjoyment of the right to education, she called on the international community to provide political, financial and technical support for inclusive and equitable educational policies for the achievement of the Education 2030 agenda.

23. **Ms. Bogyay** (Hungary) said that the report had highlighted the right to education of cultural, ethnic and linguistic minority groups and had mentioned that the national education system in Hungary gave particular attention to linguistic minority groups. Hungary was extremely concerned by a recently adopted education law in Ukraine and its adverse impact on the rights of minority groups. If implemented, the law would have a devastating effect on the Hungarian language education system in Transcarpathia, raising the possibility that Hungarian language schools would be closed down, when their functioning had traditionally been guaranteed. The law contravened international standards, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention against Discrimination in Education, both of which had been ratified by Ukraine. She wondered what action could be taken to ensure better compliance by States with their international commitments and how the importance of education in the mother tongue for minority groups could be better addressed.

24. Language was the cornerstone of civilization and the most important medium for the expression and transmission of cultural heritage. The protection of mother tongues was central to the linguistic and cultural diversity of humankind, and well-planned language policies were needed that would bolster the ongoing efforts of speaker communities to maintain and revitalize their mother tongues and pass them on to younger generations. Cultural diversity was unimaginable without linguistic diversity, and cultural diversity was not a burden but rather a source of inspiration.

25. **Mr. Torbergson** (Norway) said that his country had doubled its support to education over the past four years and was committed to continuing to support Governments in implementing inclusive and equitable education policies. The overall goal of its support was

to leave no one behind, with a particular focus on girls' education and the most hard-to-reach children. The report made a key distinction between equality and equity in education; equality was critical, but not sufficient to ensure that learners with special needs received the support they needed to succeed. It was vital to identify children and young people who were invisible in statistics, since informed policymaking would require data. Norway supported the call to strengthen measures for identifying individuals and groups that were in need of specific support, and he would like more information on practical measures States could take in identifying such groups.

26. **Ms. Fofana** (Burkina Faso) said that the report had shown the need to focus on vulnerable groups such as migrants and persons with disabilities. The Government of Burkina Faso was aware that achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals would be dependent on successfully achieving Goal 4; it had therefore committed itself to making education a reality for all throughout the country. That was reflected in the priority it accorded to education and in the rising number of teachers and educational institutions. A law on public-private partnership had recently been adopted, which aimed to accelerate the implementation of education policy. Owing to the poor security situation in the Sahel region, an emergency programme had been developed for the period 2017–2020, which would improve access to basic services, increase the population's resilience and help improve governance in that region. She would like to know what mechanisms could be used to measure progress in the area of education and better direct future action.

27. **Mr. Al-Mansouri** (Qatar) said that his country, out of a deep belief in the pivotal role of education in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, had worked to promote high-quality education at the national, regional and international levels. Qatar had placed high in regional and international rankings of educational quality. At the international level, the country had provided high-quality educational services to millions of children, especially in areas suffering from conflicts and natural disasters.

28. However, the country's educational achievements were undermined as a result of the illegal unilateral measures imposed on Qatar. Those measures had prevented hundreds of students from attending school or university. Although the States imposing those sanctions on Qatar had forced hundreds of their own nationals to discontinue their studies at Qatari institutions, Qatar had not expelled foreign students from those States, as the Qatari Government complied with human rights instruments guaranteeing the right to education. He

asked the Special Rapporteur to share her views on how the right to education could be guaranteed for refugees.

29. **Ms. Lozano Rubello** (Mexico), referring to the emphasis placed in the report on the need to address discrimination by identifying people and groups in need of specific, targeted support, said that Mexico was aware of the need to combat structural discrimination through specific policies that addressed the obstacles preventing people from exercising their right to education. Mexico had made various changes to its normative framework in recent years, focusing on education quality and reaching sectors of the population whose basic educational needs were not being met. The report mentioned the importance of promoting the quality of teaching and learning, paying special attention to strategies for placing, supporting and retaining qualified and trained teachers in rural areas. She wondered what specific strategies States had adopted to encourage qualified teachers to move to rural areas. Regarding the development of information systems providing disaggregated data on education, she would like to know which good practices had been identified in developing such systems that took into consideration civil society participation.

30. **Mr. Odisho** (Iraq) said that according to the Iraqi constitution, education was a right guaranteed to all Iraqis free of charge by the State. The Iraqi Government had launched a national education strategy for the period from 2012 to 2022 that contained a number of important elements. It aimed to improve educational quality in line with international standards by updating evaluation methods and examinations. It also aimed to promote gender equality, improve recreational spaces and initiate school theatre programmes. In areas liberated from the control of ISIL, school reconstruction projects would receive resources from a special fund.

31. The education sector faced huge challenges in Iraq, particularly in regions previously under the control of ISIL. That group had used schools as training centres where children were taught how to kill and use weapons, and school curricula had been replaced with extremist ideology. International, governmental and non-governmental organizations should therefore increase their technical and logistical assistance to Iraq and should help with the rebuilding of schools in the liberated areas. Iraq should also benefit from the experiences of other States with respect to rehabilitating students who had been exposed to violence and persecution.

32. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that her delegation had been pleased to see that some of her country's good practices had been mentioned in the report. Education

was one of its top priorities and the Government had established a programme to ensure that gender equality was taken into account more systematically in socioeconomic development programmes and policies. One of the programme's aims was to ensure equitable and equal access to good-quality education by boys and girls and to reduce the school dropout rate. Broad consultations were also under way to develop a strategic vision of education reform for the period 2015–2030.

33. She asked what measures could be taken to ensure that reliable tools were used to monitor, drive and evaluate the realization of the right to education, particularly in developing countries and in rural areas.

34. **Mr. Ustinov** (Russian Federation) said that the idea of the equal right of individuals to education, which entailed the need for additional support for some learners, required further development. Such pupils should not be granted exclusive status and special privileged groups requiring additional assistance should not be formed, as that could undermine the rights of the majority of ordinary learners.

35. A clear example of the discrimination and barriers faced by ethnic and linguistic minorities was the recent education act adopted in Ukraine, which was obviously discriminatory in nature and violated the right to receive native language instruction of millions of citizens of that country, primarily Russian speakers. The act imposed strict restrictions on the use of languages of national minorities in educational institutions, contrary to the Constitution of Ukraine and its international human rights obligations. His delegation called on the Special Rapporteur to pay close attention to the realization of the right to education of national minorities in Ukraine and to the need for the Ukrainian authorities to comply with the relevant provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Convention against Discrimination in Education. It hoped that the Special Rapporteur would provide the expert assistance needed for the Ukrainian authorities to rectify the discriminatory situation.

36. **Mr. Forax** (Observer for the European Union) said that his delegation was concerned about the gender disparities highlighted in the report and wished to echo the Special Rapporteur's call on States to identify and address the multiple barriers faced by women and girls in access to education. Referring to the measures for improving the conditions of education for girls

mentioned in the report, which were recommended by treaty bodies such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), he said that he would like further information on the need to provide safe educational environments that were free from discrimination and violence. In addition, he would like to hear some examples of best practice regarding short-term measures for providing refugees with access to education.

37. **Ms. Fernández Fernández** (Cuba) said that realization of the right to education created favourable conditions for the enjoyment of other human rights. What role could international collaboration play in promoting the right to education, whether by providing financing, sharing best practices and experiences and contributing human resources for implementation?

38. **Ms. Mkhwanazi** (South Africa) said that the right to education remained one of her country's foremost priorities, including the critical need to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all when implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and working towards all the other internationally agreed goals.

39. The Special Rapporteur had considered individuals and groups who were at risk of exclusion in her report, but there was a need to emphasize the exclusion of children who were forced into dangerous and physically demanding jobs to maximize commercial profits. In those circumstances, the right to education could never be realized; she would be interested in hearing the views of the Special Rapporteur on reaching those children. Lastly, she asked the Special Rapporteur to comment on the fundamental link between the right to education and the right to development.

40. **Ms. Gray** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that making progress on ensuring the right to education worldwide was a shared responsibility. UNESCO welcomed the importance attached in the report to equitable approaches to education in favour of the marginalized and the vulnerable. UNESCO was a strong advocate of the transformational power of education; equitable, good quality and inclusive education was a key lever of sustainable development, respect for human rights and effective conflict prevention. UNESCO particularly appreciated the Special Rapporteur's active participation in and contribution to the work of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee convened by UNESCO, which was a multi-stakeholder mechanism for coordinating efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4.

41. Given that the primary role for ensuring the right to education rested with Governments, she wondered

how Governments could effectively encourage all stakeholders to fully engage with and contribute to the goal of inclusive, equitable and good-quality education on a collective basis. She also asked how Governments could proactively support the creation of an enabling environment for shared responsibility and capacity-building to ensure that all actors were accountable for achieving the desired learning outcomes.

42. **Ms. Widodo** (Indonesia) said that the right to education was guaranteed by the Indonesian constitution. Following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, her Government was striving to address existing challenges and to improve access to education for children from the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. The Indonesian Government had established special needs schools, increased the number of inclusive schools at all levels and had also taken action to improve accessibility. In addition, her Government was responsible for guaranteeing access to education for the children of Indonesian migrant workers abroad. With the cooperation of the Government of Malaysia, Indonesia had established community learning centres in Sabah and Sarawak to provide primary education. Those schools followed the national curriculum to ensure that the students received the same education as children in Indonesia.

43. Her delegation would like further information on recommendations to improve the quality of disaggregated data collection and analysis at the national and local levels, particularly for the formulation of education policies and programmes for children from marginalized groups as part of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

44. **Ms. Razana** (Maldives), welcoming the report's focus on equity and inclusion in protecting and promoting the right to education, said that her country was fortunate in that families attached equal importance to boys' and girls' educational attainment. Hence, enrolment in primary and secondary education was universal and girls outperformed boys by a considerable margin. Ensuring the right of all children to education without discrimination was a key policy priority and was constitutionally guaranteed. Maldives provided free primary and secondary education to all children and was continually improving the quality of its schools, teachers, curriculums and approaches to ensure that no children were left behind and to promote lifelong learning. Education was a powerful tool that could transform society, and her delegation fully supported the initiatives to address discrimination through decentralized decision-making and inclusive consultations.

45. Maldives lacked technical and human resources capacity, particularly in data collection and analysis and in preparing baseline data for Sustainable Development Goal indicators. The report emphasized the importance of collecting and publishing disaggregated data in order to achieve inclusive and equitable education and she would like to hear more about the technical support available for collecting disaggregated data and the reporting mechanisms for publishing such data.

46. **Mr. Yaremko** (Ukraine) said that there were 735 schools in Ukraine in which children from minority groups could be educated in their native languages and a total of 400,000 children benefited. All such schools were financed from the national budget. Ukraine provided education in five languages other than Ukrainian: Moldovan, Polish, Russian, Romanian and Hungarian.

47. A 2016 study of the results of Ukrainian language examinations had revealed that children who failed those examinations suffered discrimination and had diminished future prospects. His Government was not prohibiting education in the national minority languages; rather, it was expanding education in Ukrainian to ensure that all Ukrainian nationals could speak the national language.

48. **Ms. Boly Barry** (Special Rapporteur on the right to education) said that she had been very reassured to hear representatives from all over the world describe their commitment to combating discrimination and addressing the problems of equity and inclusion in education.

49. The questions regarding the use of the mother tongue in national education systems and regarding motivating and training teachers in rural areas all related to education quality. Many studies had shown that children learned faster in their first language. That approach also gave children access to their own culture and values and she encouraged States to ensure that all children were educated in their first language during their first years at school. The best way to achieve that was to decentralize education, so that smaller communities could decide on the language of instruction themselves on a non-arbitrary basis. Conflicts and wars often arose because of a lack of consultation, and schools could therefore participate in the peacebuilding dynamic by taking everyone's views into account.

50. Regarding training and motivating teachers in rural areas, it was very important to visit schools in rural areas and talk to the teachers and the wider community. It was no use for capital cities to decide what teachers in villages needed. Teachers in rural areas whose schools had no lighting could be provided with lamps,

and teachers whose students did well could be provided with incentives that need not be financial.

51. Questions had been asked regarding the best way to take into account groups such as refugees, girls and those with specific needs. The answer in all cases was education governance. Once again, decentralization was vital and decisions should be taken at the grassroots level. The best solutions would be found when all stakeholders were involved, including civil society, teachers and families, through a participatory planning process. However, words alone would not suffice; there must be budget allocations for the additional spending required to address such issues as refugees and access for girls. Mistakes were sometimes made but lessons could always be learned.

52. **Mr. Alston** (Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights) introducing his report (A/72/502), said that the report focused on the enjoyment of civil and political rights by people living in poverty. It sought to demonstrate that the poor experienced violations both disproportionately and differently from others; that their civil and political rights were systematically neglected by mainstream human rights and development actors; that the resulting situation undermined the principle of the indivisibility of all human rights; and that both the human rights and development communities must ensure that respect for and promotion of all the human rights of those living in poverty were incorporated into the programmes and policies they recommended.

53. Several conclusions emerged from the many ways described in the report that the civil and political rights of those living in poverty were violated. There was very little data on the socioeconomic background of victims of rights violations and surprisingly little academic work on the issue. Broad policy documents that recognized the need to address civil and political rights in anti-poverty efforts were often so general, however, that they were largely meaningless in practical terms. Persons living in poverty were often ignored as a vulnerable group, as well. The new approach called for would involve the collection of relevant data to enable both governmental and non-governmental actors to identify the extent to which the poor were affected by different types of violations so that recommended solutions could be adjusted to the needs identified.

54. *Ms. Al-Temimi (Qatar), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

55. **Mr. Yao** Shaojun (China) said that on the basis of the prevailing circumstances of the country, his Government had prioritized the rights to survival and development, advancing various social causes to enable all people to benefit fairly from development gains and

to ensure their right to equal participation. Since the process of reform and opening up had begun, China had lifted 700 million people out of poverty — over 70 per cent of the global total — and had thus made a significant contribution to international efforts to reduce poverty and promote human rights. It would continue to fulfil its international obligations commensurate with its stage and level of development with a view to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

56. As United Nations experts, Special Rapporteurs should act in compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council, perform their duties in an objective and equitable manner, and take a constructive attitude in their dialogues with national Governments.

57. The accusations subsequently levelled by the Special Rapporteur against the Chinese Government were not true, and China firmly rejected them. His delegation urged the Special Rapporteur to conduct his duties in strict compliance with the Code of Conduct and the mandate of the Human Rights Council, cooperate with and respect the arrangements made by host countries, and refrain from imposing pressure in public.

58. As poverty was at the root of many violations of civil and political rights, his delegation wished to know whether the Special Rapporteur had any specific recommendations for eliminating poverty in developing countries.

59. **Ms. Al Nussairy** (Iraq) asked the Special Rapporteur whether terrorist acts, waves of displacement and natural disasters were seen as factors that could hinder attempts to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. She further wondered if the Special Rapporteur could suggest measures to deal with those challenges.

60. The Iraqi Government had developed its second strategy for poverty reduction, which emphasized the issues of economic crises and internally displaced persons. It also addressed the need for new funding and envisaged broader efforts to obtain support from international organizations. The strategy also aimed at helping displaced persons regardless of whether they were currently displaced or had returned to their original homes. It provided for the rebuilding of schools and health facilities as soon as possible and restoring water and electricity. The Government had established a fund to rebuild areas destroyed by terrorist groups.

61. Although Iraq had successfully lowered its poverty rate in 2014, the rise of ISIL and the decrease in



world oil prices had caused the poverty rate to climb to over 22 per cent. Accordingly, the Government had established a social fund in cooperation with the World Bank to assist the poor and create temporary job opportunities.

62. **Mr. Forax** (Observer for the European Union) said that the broad support in the Human Rights Council for the mandate demonstrated the importance of combating extreme poverty for the universal realization of human rights. The European Union fully agreed with the assessment that extreme poverty prevented individuals from enjoying not only their economic and social rights but also some of their civil and political rights. That was particularly worrying given the rising economic inequality, which affected all States.

63. The European Union was committed to actively promoting and defending human rights both within its own borders and in its relations with countries outside the Union, to ensure that vulnerable persons were able to enjoy their civil and political rights. He would like to know how the indicators on extreme poverty could be modified to better take into account that the civil and political rights of vulnerable people were disproportionately violated.

64. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that the national human development initiative launched by Morocco in 2005 was at the heart of its policy to combat social exclusion and poverty. Over the past 10 years, 40 billion dirhams had been invested through the initiative, as a result of which the number of people in a situation of multidimensional poverty had fallen from 7.5 million in 2004 to 2.8 million in 2014. The incidence of multidimensional poverty had dropped from 25 per cent to 8.2 per cent over the same period, with reductions in both urban and rural environments.

65. **Mr. Castillo Santana** (Cuba) said that his delegation agreed that misperceptions such as the idea that human rights experts were not qualified to comment on technical subjects of economic policy had prevented a comprehensive response to the serious problems associated with economic insecurity. The issue of basic income was important and should be considered among the many other measures that could be taken to tackle economic insecurity. It would only be possible to find a truly sustainable solution to the problem if the causes of poverty were addressed in depth.

66. **Ms. Brooks** (United States of America) said that her country acknowledged that poverty was multidimensional and involved more than simply a lack of income. Extreme poverty was often correlated with social exclusion and a lack of access to education. It was important to enhance gender equality, especially among

women and girls in lower income quintiles across the globe. Governments should challenge traditional practices that sought to deny rights to any individual, including those belonging to vulnerable groups.

67. Economic development was crucial to alleviating poverty. States also had human rights obligations that were not contingent on development. When human rights were not respected, that could create challenges for States trying to achieve economic development. She asked whether the Special Rapporteur had any suggestions for how countries could enhance gender equality in lower income quintiles.

68. **Mr. Alston** (Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights) said that he agreed with the representative of China that its achievement in lifting 700 million people out of extreme poverty was extraordinary and praiseworthy. In China, the rural areas were no longer the main concern; the main issue that remained unaddressed was urban poverty, which was predominantly experienced by the country's 200 million migrant workers. Under the household registration system, migrant workers were expected to obtain support from their home villages in the countryside, but that was not feasible for those living and working in the cities. The Chinese Government had in the past been reluctant to make changes to such a complex system, but perhaps that attitude would change as part of a new poverty agenda in the country.

69. The representative of China had suggested that the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council had not been followed. However, it should be pointed out that under the Code of Conduct, Special Rapporteurs should not be prevented by Governments from meeting with anyone, and they should not be followed by unidentified security officials. Shortly after the visit to China, the Government had arrested and convicted Jiang Tianyong, a human rights lawyer who had defended detainees. His treatment while in custody had been poor, but the Special Rapporteur hoped for an eventual outcome that would be satisfactory to the international community.

70. He agreed with the delegation of Iraq that the issue of terrorism and its relation to poverty was very important. The problem could, however, be examined from a variety of angles. For example, poverty often resulted from the social exclusion of specific groups, and such exclusion could fuel the fires of terrorism. Therefore, it was important to bear in mind that policies that failed to promote inclusion might give rise to problems.

71. The European Union had mentioned the significant implications of rising inequality around the

world. Unfortunately, very few countries were concerned about reducing inequality, which would have serious repercussions for the enjoyment of political rights everywhere, including developed countries. When capital and income were overwhelmingly held by a tiny minority, civil and political rights would be undermined and subverted by the extremely powerful. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were concerned about the negative impact that income inequality would have on economic growth.

72. With respect to indicators that would foster an understanding of the violations of the civil and political rights of the poor, the report focused on the need to disaggregate data according to income. For example, police violence was overwhelmingly directed at the poor. The poor were also the victims of a range of other violations of civil and political rights, but the analyses rarely made that clear and the prescriptions were not directed specifically at the poor.

73. In response to the representative of Cuba, the Special Rapporteur had submitted a report in June 2017 to the Human Rights Council on the possibility of a universal basic income for all citizens in different countries. It was important to explore ways to guarantee a minimum level of social protection. Conditionality, whereby individuals must meet many criteria or behave in certain ways in order to qualify for assistance, was increasing in many countries and was inconsistent with the notion that everyone was entitled to minimum social protection.

74. The representative of the United States had placed special emphasis on gender equality, and it was true that women and girls were always worse off than men with respect to income and wages. Current global trends towards privatization and a decreased role for the State shifted the burden of care for children, the elderly and persons with disabilities from the State or other actors to women. The key pillars of neoliberal economic policy were premised on a failure to address the needs of women and girls.

75. **Mr. Yao Shaojun** (China) said that although his country had made great gains in poverty reduction, it needed to continue its efforts. The Government was currently working to improve living standards for rural labourers working in cities. Changes were already being made to the household registration system. Twenty-four provinces had eliminated the restrictions relating to distinctions between rural and urban registration, such that rural workers could now enjoy, to the same extent as others, employment, education, insurance and other

services. Therefore the household registration system no longer constituted an impediment.

76. The individual mentioned by the Special Rapporteur had broken the laws of China and was awaiting trial. His detention was not related to the visit of the Special Rapporteur.

77. Special procedures, as United Nations experts, must uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter and respect the sovereignty of States, including by not interfering in their internal affairs, and perform their duties in an objective and equitable manner in line with their mandates. It was his understanding that the focus of the mandate of the current Special Rapporteur was on helping Member States to eliminate poverty, not a discussion of civil and political rights, which, though also important, was an issue handled by a separate Special Rapporteur. He therefore recommended that the Special Rapporteur keep to his mandate and come up with feasible suggestions to assist developing countries to improve living standards for their people and eliminate poverty. Otherwise it would be difficult to distinguish his mandate from others.

78. **Ms. Al Nussairy** (Iraq) said that Iraq was a demographically diverse country that respected minorities, as reflected in the composition of its parliament. Iraqi forces had faced acts of violence and destruction of infrastructure committed by terrorist groups that had come from outside the country.

79. **Mr. Alston** (Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights) said that he fully agreed that the activities of foreign terrorist groups in Iraq had had major implications for the ability of the Government to address poverty and human rights.

80. He was pleased to hear that the Chinese Government was making reforms to the household registration system and was optimistic that better arrangements would emerge for migrant workers. In response to the question regarding the authority of the Special Rapporteur on poverty to discuss civil and political rights, he said that those who lived in poverty had a different experience of rights than did those who were not poor. For example, given that the poor were disproportionately the victims of torture, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty should make an effort to understand that phenomenon.

*The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.*