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Chair: Ms. Kaszás (Vice-Chair) (Hungary)

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In the absence of Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland), Chair, Ms. Kaszás (Hungary), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 72: Promotion and protection of human rights (A/72/40 and A/C.3/72/9) (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,

A/72/131, A/72/132, A/72/133, A/72/135, A/72/137, A/72/139, A/72/140, A/72/153, A/72/155, A/72/162, A/72/163, A/72/164, A/72/165, A/72/170, A/72/171, A/72/172, A/72/173, A/72/187, A/72/188, A/72/201, A/72/202, A/72/219, A/72/230, A/72/256, A/72/260, A/72/277, A/72/280, A/72/284, A/72/289, A/72/290, A/72/316, A/72/335, A/72/350, A/72/351, A/72/365, A/72/370, A/72/381, A/72/495, A/72/496, A/72/502, A/72/518, A/72/523 and A/72/540)

(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 and 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. **Mr. El Hacen** (Mauritania) said that the Constitution of Mauritania guaranteed the equality of all citizens, and it was a party to the main international human rights instruments. Since ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2001, it had been working to achieve gender equality and promote the economic empowerment of women, and after ratifying of the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture in 2012, it had established a subcommittee on prevention as required by that instrument. Furthermore, in application of a 2012 constitutional amendment making slavery a crime against humanity, it had established special regional anti-slavery courts. It welcomed the visits of special rapporteurs seeking to examine its progress on human rights. Mauritania operated social welfare programmes for the most vulnerable groups, and it had established a national youth council in order to ensure the participation and contribution of young people.

2. **Mr. Menelaou** (Cyprus) said that Turkey continued to exploit the unlawfully seized property of 120,000 Greek Cypriots, denying them the right to return to their homes. Moreover, it had deliberately colonized the occupied areas, changing the demographic character of the island in violation of international humanitarian law. The enclaved Greek Cypriots experienced ongoing violations of their freedoms of education and religion, including textbook censorship, arbitrary rejection of appointments of Greek Cypriot teachers, desecration of churches and cemeteries, intimidation of worshippers and arbitrary denial of requests to conduct religious services. To make matters worse, Turkey had imposed taxes effective 1 October that prevented the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus from delivering humanitarian aid to them.

3. Given that more than two thirds of the remains of 2,001 missing persons were still unidentified, Turkey should provide unrestricted access to all areas, disclose any useful information, including evidence of the removal of remains, and launch an effective investigation to establish their fate and whereabouts.

4. Cyprus was deeply concerned about the impact of increasingly authoritarian Turkish policies on the lives of Cypriots in the illegally occupied areas. Having suffered widespread destruction and looting of its religious and cultural heritage there, it welcomed the recent entry into force of the European Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property. A comprehensive, just and sustainable solution to the Cyprus problem would require respect for the human rights of all Cypriots, regardless of ethnic origin or religion, and could only be achieved by establishing a federal state in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

5. **Mr. Christodoulidis** (Greece) said that Greece was determined to support, promote and defend the universality, indivisibility and interdependency of human rights by fully cooperating with the United Nations system. In response to the migrant/refugee crisis, it would continue to coordinate with all relevant stakeholders, emphasizing burden sharing, addressing root causes and, above all, saving lives. In recognition of the need to promote freedom of expression, it was one of the main sponsors the draft resolution on the safety of journalists.

6. Forty-three years after the illegal occupation of more than one third of the territory of Cyprus, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Cyprus were still being violated. Turkey continued to prevent almost 200,000 internally displaced Greek Cypriots from returning to their ancestral homes, and its

massive, illegal sale of Greek Cypriot property exacerbated the problem. At the same time, by colonizing occupied Cyprus, it was altering the demographic character of the area, in blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions. Furthermore, it had recently imposed a tax on humanitarian aid to the enclaved Greek Cypriots. Greece attached particular importance to the issue of missing persons, some of whom were Greek nationals, and was gravely concerned at the widespread looting and destruction of the Christian and Hellenic cultural heritage in the occupied area. It supported efforts to achieve a comprehensive, viable and just settlement of the Cyprus issue in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principles and values of the European Union.

7. **Ms. Alfassam** (Kuwait), noting that all citizens were equal under the Kuwaiti Constitution, said that her country protected and promoted the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all, with special attention to the most vulnerable. It was a party to the major human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two Optional Protocols and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It also participated in international forums and made voluntary contributions to United Nations human rights programmes and mechanisms. At the national and local levels, its human rights laws protected economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights of the family, and institutions had been established to protect and promote the rights of children. Kuwait recognized the right of both citizens and non-citizens to education, which was free and compulsory at the primary and intermediate levels. Human rights were taught through the tertiary level.

8. Kuwait attached particular importance to protecting the rights of the citizens of more than 120 different countries living within its borders. It strongly condemned the illegal practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories, including confiscation and demolition of property and displacement and detention of thousands of Palestinians.

9. It was closely monitoring the situation of the Rohingya driven from Myanmar by violence that constituted a crime against humanity. Her delegation agreed with the findings in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (A/72/382) and stressed the importance of implementing the recommendations regarding the violations of the rights of the Rohingya minority.

10. **Mr. Grysa** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the States' commitment to upholding civil and political rights must be accompanied by a determination to advance economic, social and cultural rights. In practice, that meant having laws to protect every human life from conception to natural death and institutions to fulfil the right of every person to food, housing, work, basic health care, education and freedom of religion, with special support and attention to persons with disabilities. Yet human rights continued to be challenged, ignored and violated for reasons of profit, political expediency and security. Nowhere were the results more apparent, perhaps, than in the crisis faced by migrants, refugees and the forcibly displaced. The international community must not let the misconceptions surrounding migration become an excuse for avoiding its responsibility to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, with full respect for human rights. While States had the right to control their borders, they must do so in full accord with the human rights of migrants and refugees, regardless of their migratory status. Conversely, migrants had a responsibility to abide by the laws and regulations of the receiving countries.

11. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that her Government welcomed the report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan (A/HRC/36/63), in which he recognized positive developments, as well as Human Rights Council resolution 36/26 on technical assistance and capacity-building to improve human rights in the Sudan, which acknowledged its new humanitarian policies calling for rapid and unhindered humanitarian access.

12. In view of the need to improve access to justice and strengthen the justice system, Sudan had deployed additional public prosecutors, judges and police officers, and it regularly provided data and statistics on the reporting, investigation and prosecution of crimes. To protect the approximately 2 million refugees living in the Sudan, it had adopted a law on combating human trafficking and had acceded to the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. It had also signed a renewable six-month agreement with South Sudan to allow the World Food Programme to deliver cross-border humanitarian aid.

13. Her Government welcomed the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development and thanked the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights for his role in convincing the United States of America to lift its sanctions. A comprehensive approach to human rights should include debt forgiveness, which would allow developing countries to dedicate resources to promoting human rights,

combating smuggling and human trafficking, countering violent extremism and improving the conditions of migrants and refugees. Sudan remained committed to cooperation with the human rights mechanisms and considered the universal periodic review the appropriate platform for constructive dialogue. It rejected the imposition of culture-based human rights constructs that were not internationally agreed.

14. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Myanmar opposed country-specific mandates. His Government remained committed to building a peaceful, harmonious, prosperous and democratic federal union. It had already achieved a great deal, from launching new national health and education strategies to stabilizing the economy and laying the foundations for growth. To promote inclusive democracy, it was strengthening governance, reforming public institutions and improving its legislative framework. It had expressed its strong commitment to human rights by ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 6 October, and it was committed to expanding freedoms and to promoting a culture of peaceful co-existence among all faiths.

15. His Government shared the concern of the international community about the situation in Rakhine State and took it seriously. It had acted promptly to repatriate and provide humanitarian assistance to returnees, resettle and rehabilitate all displaced communities and establish sustainable peace, stability and development. It was working with Bangladesh to ensure the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons on the basis of the 1993 agreement between the two countries, including through the signature of two memorandums of understanding. In that light, its stance in international forums was most surprising. Furthermore, as the British Ambassador to Myanmar had admitted in 1975, Myanmar had some right to eject the Bengali trespassers in Rakhine. Therefore, he asked for the understanding and continued support of the international community, which was important for the success of Myanmar's efforts to find a sustainable solution in Rakhine State and build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society.

16. **Ms. Lyu Xiaoxiao** (China) said that the international community needed to solve the intractable problem of poverty, stem the rising tide of xenophobia and intolerance and stop politicizing human rights. To eliminate a major source of large-scale human rights violations, the United Nations should redouble its efforts to prevent conflict, build peace and combat terrorism. China supported the United Nations emphasis on poverty eradication, which it hoped would rectify the

imbalance between the two categories of human rights, and it encouraged the United Nations human rights bodies to devote special attention to assisting vulnerable groups and to combating discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance.

17. China was charting its own path to development based on human rights with Chinese characteristics. It had provided basic livelihoods for more than 1.3 billion people, reduced the number of poor by 800 million, created jobs for 770 million, instituted nine-year compulsory education and established a wide social safety net. It was also making progress on democracy, the rule of law and judicial protection of human rights.

18. Guided by the spirit of equality, mutual trust, mutual learning and inclusiveness, China was working to build an equitable and rational human rights system and to assist other countries in poverty reduction and livelihood improvement. It would join with all States to promote the healthy development of the international human rights causes and to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

19. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine) said that, by inviting in the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, his Government had demonstrated its firm belief in cooperation and transparency, and it welcomed the report summarizing the blatant violations of human rights committed in Crimea by the Russian Federation (A/HRC/36/CRP.3). The United Nations mission and other established monitoring missions must be allowed free access to the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea in order to monitor the occupying authorities' enforcement and compliance with Ukrainian law, and the United Nations should use all available means to secure the release of illegally detained Ukrainian citizens.

20. Ukraine was deeply concerned about the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, including new restrictive legislation, censorship, restrictions on freedom of assembly, association and expression and violations of the rights of religious communities and national and sexual minorities. It was especially concerned about the use of State-controlled media to spread hatred and enmity. According to Human Rights Watch, the Russian State was more repressive than ever before in the post-Soviet era. His delegation reiterated its appeal to the international community to continue to pressure the Russian Federation to respect human rights and release all political prisoners immediately.

21. **Ms. Ivanovic** (Serbia) said that as a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious society, Serbia was firmly committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of national minorities. Its greatest concern was for

the Serbs in the Kosovo and Metohija provinces, who continued to experience violations of their rights to security, property, instruction in the Serbian language and script, freedom of movement and freedom of religion. Although Serbia had attempted to negotiate, Kosovo had not demonstrated the necessary reciprocal goodwill, especially of late, and it remained impossible to ensure the safe and free return of the more than 200,000 internally displaced persons. Her country was also increasingly concerned at the rise of anti-Serbism in neighbouring countries.

22. Already acclaimed for its legislation on national minorities, Serbia would continue its efforts to promote the rights of all minorities and to strengthen respect for the human rights of all citizens within the process of accession to the European Union. It was complying with its reporting obligations under international human rights treaties and, in addition to issuing a standing invitation to the special procedures, it had invited the Special Rapporteur on torture to visit in November. Serbian experts participated in the work of several human rights treaty bodies.

23. **Mr. Dzonzi** (Malawi) said that his country was governed by a constitution with strong human rights protections and had ratified regional and international human rights treaties including, most recently, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. It was committed to the United Nations universal periodic review and the African Union reporting procedures for monitoring the implementation of human rights treaties. In February, to strengthen its legal framework for civil and political rights, it had adopted a new law on access to information which would be enforced by a special task force. It considered economic, social and cultural rights equally important and was endeavouring to address the socio-economic well-being of its citizens. For instance, with respect to the right to food, it was providing humanitarian food assistance in cooperation with development partners and United Nations agencies while working to mitigate the agricultural impact of climate change. It remained committed to strengthening the security of land tenure and access to land, and it was improving access to decent, affordable housing through a housing subsidy programme.

24. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his Government was committed to the promotion and protection of civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights on an equal footing. Guided by a comprehensive national human rights plan, it emphasized civil participation, support for the most vulnerable and poverty eradication. Its positive human rights record had been broadly recognized by the

international community through the universal periodic review process and its re-election to the Human Rights Council, as well as by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. It ranked high in both income equality and human development.

25. Three quarters of the national budget was allocated to social welfare programmes, including historically successful inclusion programmes, and nine out of 10 persons eligible for social security pensions collected them. His country was a participatory democracy that had held 22 elections in 18 years. Venezuelans were involved in government decision-making at every level through numerous mechanisms, including the communal and sectoral councils.

26. In the view of his Government, the issue of human rights should be addressed constructively on the basis of the principles of objectivity, impartiality, non-selectivity and non-politicization. Unilateral coercive measures such as those imposed on his country undermined peaceful coexistence and respect among States.

27. **Ms. León Murillo** (Cost Rica) said that where there was respect for human rights and the rule of law, living conditions improved, but where human rights were violated, the resulting social damage hindered sustainable development. The task of strengthening the interdependent relationship of democracy, development and respect for human rights fell not only to the State, but also to civil society, business and society as a whole.

28. Her Government emphasized human rights, the rule of law, good governance, democracy and civil participation in its national policies, and it considered the human rights dimension essential to every phase of implementing the 2030 Agenda. It paid particular attention to the most vulnerable, whose needs and concerns should be heard and taken into account in programmes and policies affecting them.

29. It was imperative to reverse the decline in respect for human rights, evidenced in disrespect for international humanitarian law in situations of armed conflict, non-compliance with the obligations of protection under refugee law and massive violations of the human rights of minority and other groups. At the international level, that meant improving prevention and accountability mechanisms and strengthening the promotion of human rights. At the national level, it meant having independent human rights institutions with sufficient power to enforce international standards, complying with human rights mechanisms such as the universal periodic review and cooperating with the Human Rights Council special procedures. It was time

to move forward rather than backward, setting aside political and short-term concerns, so that the promise of “never again” did not go unkept.

30. **Ms. Mukasa** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that under the Tanzanian Constitution, the primary objective of the State was to promote and protect human rights. Accordingly, it had undertaken significant human rights initiatives, including ratifying and domesticating regional and international instruments, repealing unconstitutional laws and establishing national human rights institutions.

31. Her Government attached particular importance to promoting and protecting the rights of persons with albinism. Thanks to the priority it placed on investigating and prosecuting cases of violence against persons with albinism and the establishment of special task forces, the number of such killings had dropped since 2015. By promoting inclusive education and providing assistive devices for children with disabilities, including those with albinism, it had brought about a dramatic increase in school enrolment of those children. To address the multiple health problems of persons with albinism, it had allocated additional resources for the purchase of medicine and equipment and establishment of new health care facilities. It provided vocational training for persons with disabilities, including those with albinism, and it had instructed local governments to allocate plots of land to them for income-generating activities.

32. **Mr. Chang** (Singapore) said that his Government considered securing the social and economic development of its people essential for realizing their human rights. In Singapore, multiple ethnic and religious communities lived peacefully side by side as a result of deliberate choices. All citizens were equal before the law, and expressions of racial or religious intolerance or extremism were not tolerated. Freedom of expression did not come without corresponding responsibilities, and Singaporeans had a shared understanding that the rights of the individual must be balanced by the rights of the society. The Singaporean approach had resulted in tangible benefits for all, including the most vulnerable. Indeed, in 2016, Singapore had ranked fifth in the human development index of the United Nations Development Programme and ninth in the Rule of Law Index of the World Justice Project.

33. However, Singapore recognized that its approach to human rights might not work for others. In any event, imposing a particular worldview on other countries without being accountable to their citizens was likely to sow discord. A better approach would be to seek

understanding on human rights issues through constructive engagement in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

34. **Mr. Idris** (Eritrea) said that, for the past six years, his country had been subjected to a politically motivated, country-specific mandate aimed at demonizing and isolating it, arresting its social and economic development and undermining its growing international engagement. The countries behind the yearly resolution, Ethiopia and Djibouti, had an axe to grind with Eritrea; Ethiopia was still occupying sovereign Eritrean territory 15 years after the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. Furthermore, both countries had terrible human rights records. One was ruled by an ethnic minority that met the legitimate demands of its citizens with force, mass killings and imprisonment and had refused the numerous requests of international human rights bodies to allow an independent investigation. The other, which was ruled by a family, restricted the fundamental freedoms of its citizens and was firing live ammunition at protesters as he spoke. The international community should not allow United Nations human rights mechanisms to be devalued by being drawn into regional conflicts.

35. Like any other country, Eritrea faced human rights challenges. It was working to accelerate development, consolidate the rule of law and strengthen national institutions, and it had made considerable progress in a number of areas, including food security, health, education and women’s empowerment.

36. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that cultural rights should be treated on an equal footing with other human rights. His Government was deeply concerned at the impact of armed conflict on the cultural rights of people across the globe. Its own cultural heritage had been deliberately destroyed and plundered in Armenia and the occupied Azerbaijani territories, and the Armenian occupation continued to prevent Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons from visiting the graves of their relatives and praying in their native land. His Government was also concerned at the escalation of violence against people of African descent in the United States of America. In closing, he recalled the need to create an enabling environment for environmental defenders.

37. **Ms. Özçeri** (Turkey) said that her Government remained deeply concerned about the rise of xenophobic nationalism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia across Europe, as well as the proliferation of far-right and anti-migrant narratives and violence in Western countries. It called for an end to impunity and the

restoration of accountability across the Syrian Arab Republic, together with the political change desired by the Syrian people. Especially in view of the growing humanitarian tragedy in Myanmar, it encouraged efforts towards a long-term solution based on the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

38. Freedom of expression, assembly and association were guaranteed under the Turkish Constitution. Despite the security measures required by serious threats of terrorism, her Government attached the utmost importance to preserving the pluralistic nature of Turkish civil society and media and to protecting the work of human rights defenders. Following the coup attempt by the Fetullahist Terrorist Organization, it had acted in full compliance with Turkish law and its international obligations. Turkish investigations were conducted according to due process, and legal remedies were available. It was regrettable that the countries which had criticized the response of her Government, which claimed to be champions of democracy, had chosen not to support the democratically elected Government of Turkey.

39. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that the Moroccan Constitution of 2011 contained explicit guarantees of the universally recognized political, economic and social rights. It also enshrined the principle of gender equality. Accordingly, in 2013, Morocco had established a centre of excellence for gender-sensitive budgeting, and in 2014, it had set up an inter-ministerial equality commission to monitor the implementation of the governmental equality plan. To protect and promote other vulnerable groups, it had adopted policies such as a national youth strategy, a child protection policy, a policy on the rights of disabled persons and an immigration and asylum policy, which had already resulted in the regularization of 25,000 undocumented persons. In Morocco, international law prevailed over domestic law, and the Kingdom was making every effort to bring its national legislation into line with the international human rights instruments.

40. **Mr. Alhakim** (Iraq) said that it was crucial to focus on the needs and concerns of individuals when formulating international mechanisms and instruments to protect and promote human rights and freedoms. At a time when new human rights abuse patterns were emerging, more restrictions were being placed on the freedoms of individuals and more frequent attempts were being made to undermine human dignity, those mechanisms and instruments were more important than ever.

41. Iraq strongly condemned all forms of discrimination, including on grounds of colour, race, religion, language, belief or social status, and believed that the eradication of all forms of discrimination must remain a guiding principle for all societies endeavouring to promote human dignity and move forward. In that regard, the Sustainable Development Goals provided a basis for strengthening and protecting the rights of individuals, including their social, economic and cultural rights, and could, inter alia, facilitate efforts by societies to combat all types of discrimination.

42. Terrorist attacks by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) had had far-reaching repercussions for Iraq and the wider Middle East region, not only because that terrorist organization had killed so many and destroyed so much, but also because it had perpetrated such extensive human rights abuses. To address the threat posed by ISIL and promote human rights, the Government of Iraq had drawn up a comprehensive regional strategy to combat terrorism through development; Iraq was well aware that the peoples of the region shared many concerns and believed that, to address those concerns, it was essential, first and foremost, to spur economic development across the region. Comprehensive economic development was, moreover, the only effective way by which States could counter extremism. Iraq also underscored that the region could never enjoy long-term justice, security, peace and prosperity without reconciliation among Middle Eastern societies.

43. **Mr. Sandoval Mendiola** (Mexico) said that human rights should be a cross-cutting issue in United Nations reform. Peace, security and development were impossible without a life of dignity for all, yet to date, despite progress in strengthening the human rights mechanisms, the United Nations had been unable to prevent unacceptable, globally damaging human rights situations. While Mexico was not blameless, it was one of the countries most open to international scrutiny and cooperation with the human rights entities of the United Nations and the inter-American system, and it considered it the duty of every State to respect the human rights of all persons at all times, even during conflict or states of emergency.

44. Mexico was concerned at the racist, ultranationalist narratives and systematic violations of human rights in many parts of the world. Rather than build walls, States must strive towards a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration that protected the rights of migrants, regardless of their migratory status, had a cross-cutting gender perspective and was based on the principle of shared responsibility.

45. In regard to terrorism, it was vital to ensure that antiterrorist operations respected human rights and were not used to silence the political opposition. Reforms affecting the Secretariat's counter-terrorism activities should make human rights a fundamental consideration in all actions.

46. **Ms. Flores** (Honduras) said that her Government was committed to the protection and promotion of human rights in accordance with the Honduran Constitution. It was striving to improve living conditions so that Hondurans did not need to migrate, and it had also taken steps to strengthen and assist migrants and their families. For example, it had set up a mechanism for communicating with human rights organizations, and it had signed an agreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in order to promote the passage of a bill on refugees currently before Congress. It had launched a number of initiatives to help Honduran migrants in receiving countries, and it was implementing policies to ease the reintegration of returning migrants. In addition, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras were working with Mexico and the United States of America to refine the Alliance for Prosperity plan.

47. Honduras reiterated its commitment to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, as well as its support for the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The goal of Member States should be not to stop migration, which was a fundamental right, but to eradicate the causes of forced and irregular migration.

48. **Mr. Locsin** (Philippines) said that the interdependence of human rights and sustainable development were reflected in his Government's Ambisyon Natin 2040 vision and its development plan for 2017–2022. His Government was sensitive to its obligation to promote and protect human rights, especially those of the most vulnerable, and it would pursue social justice and defend the Philippine people against all threats from States and criminal elements. The Presidential Human Rights Committee coordinated human rights policy, and the next five-year human rights action plan was being drafted. The Philippines investigated all credible allegations of human rights violations and ensured that perpetrators were held accountable. During its third universal periodic review in May 2017, it had discussed human rights issues transparently with a desire to address concerns. It saw its participation in the review process not solely in terms of compliance but as a contribution to the continued relevance of the Human Rights Council.

49. **Mr. Shafer** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that the increased targeting of civilians in conflict situations contributed to human displacement, food shortages and other humanitarian crises. The Order of Malta, which operated in 120 countries, had been providing humanitarian relief for 900 years. By virtue of its neutrality and long experience, it had been able to intervene quickly and professionally in difficult situations to provide emergency aid and medical and social programmes for refugees and displaced persons.

50. **Ms. Kovacs** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that after a 10-year decline, the number of chronically undernourished people had jumped from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016, owing primarily to a larger number of conflicts but also to climate change. The FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the right to food recommended, inter alia, that food aid policies should follow a human rights-based approach, take into account national efforts to ensure food security and avoid the disruption of local capacity and cultures. Over the years, FAO itself had worked directly with a number of post-conflict States to implement the right to food. It was also partnering with the European Union to help 33 countries strengthen policies addressing the root causes of hunger and malnutrition. Of those countries, 15 were or had been affected by conflict.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

51. **Ms. Özçeri** (Turkey) said that the representative of Greece had presented a selective, one-sided interpretation of history that conveniently omitted certain facts. In 1963, Turkish Cypriots had been forced out of government institutions and legislative and judiciary bodies, and well-documented atrocities had been committed against them. Subsequently, in 1964, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus had been deployed. Over the next 10 years, 180,000 Turkish Cypriots had been displaced and corralled into scattered enclaves, and in 1974, Greece had instigated a coup in an attempt to annex the island. Acting within its rights and responsibilities as a guarantor Power under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, Turkey had intervened to protect Turkish Cypriots and prevent the annexation.

52. The Turkish Cypriot authorities had demonstrated political will during several rounds of negotiations leading to the United Nations comprehensive settlement plan, which Turkish Cypriots had overwhelmingly approved, as well as during the most recent talks, which had ended without an agreement. As a result, Turkish Cypriots continued to experience unacceptable isolation, which the Member States should end by

establishing direct economic, social, cultural and commercial relations without further delay.

53. The Turkish Cypriot authorities were taking all necessary steps to ensure that the work of the Committee on Missing Persons proceeded unhindered. Hundreds of Turkish Cypriots had gone missing between 1963 and 1974; attempts to exploit a humanitarian issue for purposes of political propaganda undermined the excellent work of that Committee.

54. The Immovable Property Commission, which had been endorsed by the European Court of Human Rights, had been providing redress for Greek Cypriots in northern Cyprus since 2005, and since the opening of a crossing point in 2003, Greek Cypriots there had been able to cross easily to southern Cyprus. Furthermore, Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots had established a joint technical committee to address cultural heritage issues, which had carried out several significant projects related to sites in both parts of the island.

55. With respect to the new tax, the living conditions of Greek Cypriots in northern Cyprus were on a par with those of Turkish Cypriots. Furthermore; Greek Cypriots were free to travel throughout the island and could easily find aid supplies in local markets. Medical aid remained untaxed. In point of fact, the Turkish Cypriot authorities had exclusive tax jurisdiction in northern Cyprus.

56. The baseless allegations made by another delegation would be answered by its Turkish Cypriot counterpart, whose voice unfortunately could not be heard in the current forum.

57. **Ms. Michaelidou** (Cyprus) said that Cyprus regretted Turkey's insistence on disregarding the international community and violating several General Assembly and Security Council resolutions by referring to the so-called authorities in the occupied part of Cyprus. She reminded the Turkish delegation that the referenced area was the product of the illegal Turkish occupation of part of the Republic of Cyprus for over 43 years. It was time for Turkey, as the occupying Power, to end that anomaly by aligning itself with legality and United Nations resolutions. With regard to the other issues mentioned by the representative of Turkey, her delegation's positions had been expressed in its initial statement.

58. **Ms. Shlychkova** (Russian Federation) said that it was regrettable that the Ukrainian delegation had raised a status-of-territory issue under an irrelevant agenda item, simply to promote its own political agenda. She reminded the Committee that Crimea had acceded to the Russian Federation in exercise of the right to

self-determination, in full accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Declaration on the Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States.

59. **Ms. Matar** (Bahrain), responding to remarks made by the representative of the United States of America at the thirty-fifth meeting, said that the Constitution of Bahrain and her country's legislation guaranteed full and unconditional enjoyment of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and to peaceful assembly and association, except as stipulated in the Constitution and national and international instruments prohibiting incitement to sectarianism or religious, confessional or racial hatred, or actions that threatened national security or public order, undermined the rights, reputation or dignity of others, or ran counter to public morality or human rights standards. Bahrain also guaranteed civil and political rights, thereby permitting all sectors of Bahraini society to participate fully in, and make a positive contribution to, the country's development. All allegations that unwarranted restrictions were placed on the right to freedom of opinion and expression and on the right to peaceful assembly and association were therefore completely false.

60. **Mr. Yaremko** (Ukraine), responding to the comments made by the representative of the Russian Federation, said that both of the key points he had raised in his previous statement, concerning human rights violations by the occupation authorities of the Russian Federation in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and human rights violations in the Russian Federation itself, had been consistent with the agenda item.

61. He emphasized that, although there were various ethnic groups living in the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea, there had never been a Crimean people as such and thus none that could exercise self-determination.

62. Despite having repeatedly called on other States to comply with international law, the Russian Federation had violated hundreds of international agreements, including the Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Budapest Memorandum) and the Treaty on friendship, cooperation and partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. It was difficult to enter into agreements with the Russian Federation, as its word was worth nothing.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.