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Chair: Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan)

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

Agenda item 74: Promotion and protection of human rights (continued)

(a) Implementation of human rights instruments (continued) (A/73/40, A/73/44, A/73/48, A/73/56, A/73/140, A/73/207, A/73/264, A/73/281, A/73/282 and A/73/309)

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(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (continued) (A/73/299, A/73/308, A/73/330, A/73/332, A/73/363, A/73/380, A/73/386, A/73/397, A/73/398 and A/73/404)

(d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (continued) (A/73/36 and A/73/399)

1. **Ms. Boly Barry** (Special Rapporteur on the right to education), introducing her report (A/73/262), said that more than half of the 25.4 million refugees in the world were of school age, and education for refugees should be viewed as a means of achieving peaceful and sustainable development in the medium and long term in host countries. It also provided for the possibility of reconstruction of conflict-affected countries by qualified and educated returnees. Several relevant statistics, detailed in the report, as well as the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016 further demonstrated the importance of education as an integral component of the response to a refugee crisis.

2. The recommendations contained in the report could serve as a baseline for States and other key actors in their efforts aimed at ensuring inclusive, high-quality education for refugees in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4. She had recommended that mass movements of refugees should be taken into account in

the strategies and planning of national educational systems, and that disaggregated data on refugees could be helpful in planning the type of support they would need. Including refugees directly in the national schools and providing flexible options, such as non-formal and accelerated classes and transitional programmes with intensive language supports, were also helpful approaches. With regard to the financing of education, it was important to note that the developing countries bore the brunt of the global refugee crisis. Efforts should be made to ensure stable and consistent sources of financial support for refugee education.

3. She urged all States and principal actors to respect the international legal framework enabling the enjoyment of the right to education for refugee populations, particularly women, girls and persons with disabilities.

4. **Ms. Al-Temimi** (Qatar) said that her country agreed with the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur that special attention should be paid to the issue of schooling for refugee girls. To that end, the Government of Qatar ensured that girls' education received a generous share of the national budget. Qatar had also recently pledged to provide quality education to one million girls by 2021, in line with the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls and Women in Developing Countries. Qatar wished to underscore the importance of the report's recommendation that Member States should expedite procedures so that refugees could obtain necessary documents, such as diplomas, from their home countries. She asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on the importance of that issue, and to provide suggestions for procedures that States could take in that regard.

5. The country had made strides in guaranteeing the right to education. It had voted for General Assembly resolution 64/290 on the right to education in emergency situations and had supported many programmes offering education to children affected by conflicts, poverty and war.

6. **Ms. Von Fossen** (United Kingdom) said that her country provided funding for education through the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait initiatives as well as bilateral programmes assisting Palestinian and other refugees. Among other initiatives, the United Kingdom had also launched the Leave No Girl Behind campaign to help the most marginalized girls to receive education.

7. The recommendations contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur were very important, and greater attention needed to be paid to protecting children from

violence and making sure that they received the mental health and psychosocial support they needed. She wished to know how to ensure the collection of sufficient data on access to, and quality of, education around the world.

8. **Mr. Forax** (Observer for the European Union) said that it was crucial to come up with long-term educational solutions for refugees in situations of protracted displacement. Schools and universities across the European Union had opened their doors to refugee children and many countries had pledged to award scholarships to enable refugees to attend national universities. Furthermore, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations dedicated more than 6 per cent of its budget to educational projects in emergency situations outside of the European Union.

9. He wished to know how the availability of sufficient numbers of teachers who were qualified and trained to teach in emergency situations could be ensured, and whether any relevant good practices could be shared. It would also be helpful to learn which approaches could be developed to bridge the gap in access to education between refugee girls and refugee boys.

10. **Ms. Savitri** (Indonesia) said that education in humanitarian situations, and particularly for refugees, deserved serious attention as education served as a critical element of the response of the international community to the refugee crisis. Despite the various international laws and agreements providing for the education of refugees, including Sustainable Development Goal 4, problems were present in primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as vocational training. Issues of bureaucracy and financing hindered the full realization of the right to education, including for refugees.

11. It was encouraging that some States, some of which were facing immense challenges from the influx of refugees, had already demonstrated some good practices. She asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on the use of information and communication technology in refugee education, especially for children, and what the best approach would be to involve refugees in the process of planning, budgeting for, evaluating and realizing their right to education.

12. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that her delegation wished to know specifically what systems would have to be created to meet the educational needs of young refugees and asylum seekers; what was required to create academic curricula for refugees; how to guarantee recognition for degrees previously earned in another

country; and how education could help refugees to integrate into society.

13. **Mr. Castillo Santana** (Cuba) said that guaranteeing free access to quality education for all Cubans had been a fundamental goal of his Government since 1 January 1959; that continued to be reflected in its most recent budget. Cuba had made great efforts to achieve strong results in education, as recognized by several specialized United Nations agencies, but faced challenges owing to the blockade imposed by the United States of America. For example, the Government was unable to acquire all the equipment necessary for its schools to provide a proper and inclusive education for all children with disabilities and other special needs. It would be useful if future reports could include recommendations aimed at ensuring that States would refrain from applying unilateral coercive measures that would prevent other States from guaranteeing the right to education.

14. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia) said that education was one of the most effective means of conflict prevention and building resilient and peaceful societies. It was important to focus on the root causes of migration in order to address its challenges in a sustainable manner. Providing better education and vocational training were key elements in that regard. Local governments in Estonia provided basic education for all children of refugees with the overall aim of integrating them beginning from their first day of school. The Ministry of Education had played a role in supporting schools having refugee students and support services were being provided to those educational institutions for the benefit of students with refugee or migration backgrounds.

15. Her delegation was seriously concerned by the difficulties of access to education in several parts of the world, recalling the fact that over half of school-aged refugees did not attend school in 2016, and was interested in the ways that information and communication technology could improve that situation. Estonia had established computer classes to assist young Syrian refugees in Jordan and also gave them training in computer maintenance in order to afford them better job prospects. She would like to hear more about the Instant Network Schools initiative to bring online education and connectivity into refugee camps and schools. Would it be useful to expand that programme to other parts of the world, and, if so, what type of support would be needed from Governments?

16. **Ms. Estrela** (Portugal) said that access to education was a basic human right and a central element of development strategy. The non-profit Global Platform for Syrian Students, founded in 2013 by the

former President of Portugal with a group of institutional partners, enabled Syrian refugee and displaced students to continue their studies in Portugal and other countries. More than 400 scholarships had been awarded thus far; her delegation called on all partners to support the Platform and join the ongoing efforts to create a rapid response mechanism.

17. Many States still supported a parallel system for educating refugees despite the fact that integration into national schools and mainstream curricula had proven to be a better solution. She wished to know what could be done to further promote and support such inclusion and integration.

18. **Ms. Gray** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO shared the concerns expressed in the report regarding the obstacles faced by migrants and refugees in the pursuit of education, including language barriers, education costs and lack of recognition for qualifications. UNESCO had worked consistently to provide standard-setting for education policies, data collection and analysis, curriculum development, teacher training and educational planning, with a view to realizing the right to education for refugees and migrants. In order to increase their access to higher education, in 2019 UNESCO would adopt a global convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications to facilitate interregional mobility and to establish practices for recognition worldwide.

19. She wondered what actions Governments should prioritize in mainstreaming refugee education into education plans and policies. She also asked how peace education and teaching the values of peace could best be instilled in learners, including refugees and migrants.

20. **Ms. Bogyay** (Hungary) said that a crucial element of the right to education was the education of minorities, specifically their right to receive education in their mother tongue. Her Government was firmly committed to promoting and protecting such a right, as enshrined in its national legislation. The education framework for indigenous nationality communities in Hungary was established in close cooperation with their representative bodies and formed part of the public education system.

21. Access to education in the mother tongue was a fundamental right, recognized in international human rights instruments. Developments in the minority language education policies of Ukraine were alarming. Hungary was extremely concerned by a recently adopted education law in Ukraine and its adverse impact on the rights of minority groups. The implementation of such legislation was an unacceptable step.

22. The number of people from minority groups forced to flee their homes owing to persecution and conflict was a matter of serious concern. The report had highlighted the power of education to counter conflict, promote peace and build a better future. She asked the Special Rapporteur to share her views on how education for minorities benefited societies as a whole.

23. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine) said that education was an effective means of ensuring peace and sustainable development among children, young people and adults. His Government was therefore committed to strengthening the potential of youth and safeguarding the enjoyment of equal rights and opportunities. Accordingly, the Ukrainian Government had launched a reform to transform the educational sector into an innovative environment, in which students developed skills that could be applied to real-world situations. It was working to ensure inclusivity in implementing the reform, taking into account a wide range of stakeholders, including national minorities.

24. Ukraine was working to further improve its legislation to ensure access to free educational and psychological development services in State and municipal institutions and had introduced new standards of quality for education and training. His Government had introduced special programmes in the temporarily occupied territories of Crimea and Donbass that created opportunities to access higher education in mainland Ukraine.

25. **Ms. Boly Barry** (Special Rapporteur on the right to education) said that education for girls in refugee situations necessitated specific conditions and a dedicated budget to ensure their protection; they should be provided with emotional support and secure spaces for learning. Their teachers should be willing to listen and capable of encouraging them to make the most of their potential. Specific measures and budgetary support were also needed for children with disabilities so that they would receive health care and education appropriate to their particular needs. The integration of refugee students into the educational system depended largely on planning and relevant legislation concerning education for refugees. It was also necessary to have a national mechanism for crisis prevention and management that would apply to refugees and their education. The training of teachers had a fundamental psychosocial element. It was important for them to be able to manage their own emotions as well as guide the refugee children, who had been through very difficult and complicated situations, in managing theirs.

26. Taking Burkina Faso as a specific example, she said that in dealing with refugees from Mali, there was

collaboration among several areas of the Government, including the Ministries of Finance and Health, as well as civil society and United Nations teams. Regulations regarding school examinations had been revisited in order to accommodate arriving refugee children. The various languages and cultures that the refugees brought with them were also taken into consideration. For instance, one simple but successful practice had been to use teachers and instructors who were among the group of refugees, pairing them with Burkinabé teachers to jointly teach classes. That had resolved the problem of a shortage of teachers and enabled the children to feel much more comfortable in their learning environment. It was also important to ensure that enough relevant data was collected regarding the education of refugees because such data formed the basis of curriculum design.

27. **Mr. Alston** (Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights) said that, since his previous report to the Committee, he had undertaken country missions to the United States and Ghana and had presented a report to the Human Rights Council on the approach of the International Monetary Fund to social protection issues (A/HRC/38/33). Introducing his report to the General Assembly (A/73/396), he said that the widespread embrace of neoliberal economic policies had fundamentally reshaped the world by minimizing the role played by Governments and the resources available to them; privatizing as many aspects of economic and social activity as possible; and reducing taxation to levels that ensured that the State was a minimal presence in the lives of its citizens and that private enterprise could perform whatever community functions might be considered indispensable.

28. The report was focused on the impact of policies promoting the privatization of public goods, spaces and services on the enjoyment of human rights within societies. Privatization was a highly complex and ubiquitous policy whose significance varied greatly depending on which of many possible forms it took and the degree of government regulation exercised over the industry, service or activity in question. Despite some success stories and the various justifications offered by its proponents, studies had nevertheless shown that private entities were more expensive and less efficient overall, provided inferior services and fostered greater corruption, especially when seen from the perspective of those living in poverty or vulnerable to human rights violations, all while reaping considerable profits. While in theory privatization was neither good nor bad, immediate steps needed to be taken by the human rights community to set appropriate standards for ensuring the collection and publication of data on its impacts on

human rights; undertake systematic studies of those impacts and insist that privatization arrangements specifically addressed them; and explore new ways to ensure meaningful accountability of States and private actors in such contexts.

29. **Mr. Forax** (Observer for the European Union) said that European Union fully subscribed to the 2030 Agenda, including Sustainable Development Goal 1 to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. Tackling the root causes of extreme poverty, which touched on numerous human rights of those affected and was intrinsically linked with discrimination, required a multifaceted approach by the international community to address discriminatory laws and practices in order to protect the most marginalized. He would be grateful for information on best practices that actively linked the implementation of Goal 1 with anti-discrimination efforts. Recalling the recent joint statement made on the International Day of the Girl Child, he asked for examples of successful initiatives specifically targeting the phenomenon of girls living in poverty and aimed at helping to bridge the gender gap.

30. **Ms. Makwabe** (South Africa) said that her delegation supported the view that full-fledged monitoring of privatized providers, including through human rights assessments, was needed. There was little indication, however, whether human rights bodies had done much to ensure that such monitoring had occurred, or to reprimand States when it had not. While extreme poverty had eased considerably, pockets of the worst forms persisted and ending it required universal social protection systems aimed at safeguarding all individuals throughout the life cycle and targeted measures to reduce disaster vulnerability and address specific underserved geographical areas within each country.

31. Despite successful political transformation in South Africa, massive poverty, inequality and unemployment remained. While both citizens and Parliament had a crucial role to play in shaping budget policy and overseeing its effective and transparent implementation, her country had reached a crossroads in fiscal governance with the adoption, in 2009, of the Money Bills Amendment Procedure and Related Matters Act, granting Parliament strong powers to amend budgets prepared by the executive. In that context, her delegation would appreciate hearing the Special Rapporteur's view on corporate sector accountability when human rights were violated by their actions.

32. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) said that her delegation wished to express its appreciation for the work of the Special Rapporteur, in particular his focus on

privatization and the insight provided by the information in his report.

33. **Mr. Alston** (Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights) said that there was unquestionably a close link between efforts to eliminate poverty and the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals. The outcome of the high-level political forum had shown insufficient accountability on human rights being meaningfully applied to the process for overseeing States' progress on the Goals, although considerable potential remained for cross-fertilization and mutual strengthening of objectives similar to those being sought.

34. With regard to the plight of the girl child, the World Bank had just released a new study in which it accepted many earlier recommendations challenging the sufficiency of the \$1.90-a-day standard, which had been heavily relied on for a long time, acknowledging that it had often failed to disaggregate the situation within a household. While a given household might be seen as having sufficient, albeit minimal, resources for subsistence, the male head of the household very often received the lion's share, while women and children, and the girl child in particular, received much less. While there was now greater awareness of the particular need to respect and promote the rights of girls and women, it was also acknowledged that not nearly enough attention had been given to the gendered dimensions of poverty.

35. He agreed that the various human rights monitoring bodies, including his own, needed to do more. The Special Rapporteur on the right to education had done extensive work on privatization, but many other mechanisms had not, as it was extremely hard for such bodies to conduct effective follow-up. Instead of a single Government, there were now hundreds or thousands of private entities doing different things, in different places and in different ways, thereby fragmenting accountability. Similarly, where much of the responsibility for situations monitored by those bodies had once been retained by Governments, those Governments had also retained clear human rights obligations. Under privatization, Government was only a small part of what was happening in society, and human rights bodies were poorly equipped to know what was going on, to have standards that corporatized entities would acknowledge and to promote serious accountability. Much more reflection was therefore needed on how human rights bodies could respond effectively to the new situation.

36. The guiding principles proposed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of

human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises (A/HRC/17/31, annex) had represented a major breakthrough in corporate sector accountability. Corporations, however, currently did not seem much more human rights-conscious than previously. The vast majority were interested in profit, not human rights, leaving the public sector, the Government and other actors to hold them to account, which was not happening meaningfully or effectively in the vast majority of cases. In his report on his mission to the United States (A/HRC/38/33/Add.1), he had argued that human rights policy had been nowhere more dramatically affected than by the tax cuts adopted in December 2017, which had been about more than just money, finances and taxes. The human rights community needed to realize that the key to issues involving children, women, the criminal justice system and education lay in fiscal policy and to engage much more systematically with it, as that was what determined whether money was available, who it went to and which issues were addressed adequately.

37. **Mr. Korneliou** (Cyprus) said that the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Cypriots continued to be violated as a result of the 1974 invasion and ongoing occupation of part of Cyprus by Turkey. Such violations included the continued internal displacement of one third of the Greek Cypriot population; the deprivation of the right of Greek Cypriots to enjoy their homes and properties in the occupied areas and the unlawful exploitation and use of those properties; the deliberate transfer by Turkey of settlers to the occupied part of Cyprus with a view to altering the island's demographics, in violation of the Geneva Conventions and international law; the significant reduction in the number of Greek Cypriots enclaved in the occupied part of the island, from 20,000 in 1974 to a few hundred currently, as a result of discriminatory treatment; the lack of information on the whereabouts of hundreds of missing persons, both combatants and civilians, 44 years after the invasion; the systematic prevention of Christian worship in the occupied territories; and the ongoing deliberate destruction of religious and cultural heritage and looting of cultural, archaeological and religious treasures.

38. Calling on Turkey once again to allow unrestricted access to all areas, including its archives, so that families could be informed about the fate of missing loved ones, Cyprus remained equally concerned about the impact of the human rights situation in Turkey on the everyday life of Cypriots in the occupied territories, reiterating the need to respect democratic values and human rights, in full compliance with international law. His Government remained committed to the protection

and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots, irrespective of ethnic origin, race and religion, in a reunited country where rule of law would ensure the full equality of all citizens, in line with European and international standards.

39. **Ms. Theofili** (Greece) said that, seventy years after the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, effective action was still required to achieve sustainable peace, security and development, which could only be achieved when interlinked with and reinforced by the full enjoyment of human rights by all individuals. Fully committed to defending and promoting the fundamental principles and values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration, Greece had extended a standing invitation to international human rights mechanisms.

40. At the national level, the Government of Greece implemented a human rights policy based on the principles of equality, diversity and non-discrimination and aimed at accommodating people's needs through the implementation of several national human rights action plans. It had also recently introduced a number of legislative initiatives aimed at achieving equal treatment and enjoyment of human rights for all people within its territory. In response to the migrant/refugee crisis, her country was determined to continue to coordinate with all relevant stakeholders to address root causes and, above all, save lives, with priority given to protecting the most vulnerable groups.

41. Sadly, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people in the Republic of Cyprus continued to be violated 44 years after the Turkish invasion. Greece was most concerned about the humanitarian tragedy of missing persons, some of whom were Greek nationals. It was also concerned about the prevention by Turkey of almost 200,000 internally displaced Greek Cypriots from exercising their ancestral property rights, exacerbated by the massive, illegal sale of their properties, and the denial of the protection of full human rights to enclaved Greek Cypriots; changes to the demographic character of the occupied part of Cyprus as a result of the illegal influx of Turkish settlers, in blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions; and the widespread looting and destruction of the Christian and Hellenic cultural heritage of Cyprus. Greece supported efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, viable, functional and just settlement of the problem, to create a reunified Cyprus, free from foreign occupation forces, external guarantees and "intervention" rights of third-party States.

42. **Mr. Thein** (Myanmar) said that his Government was committed to working with countries and

organizations, including the United Nations, to promote and protect the fundamental human rights of its people through the enhancement of the rule of law and justice. Calling for adherence to the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicization in addressing human rights issues, Myanmar was against country-specific resolutions in the Third Committee, stressing that constructive engagement and cooperation, in particular through the universal periodic review, was the only way to successfully tackle such issues worldwide.

43. Myanmar was a multireligious, multi-ethnic and secular nation with a long-running internal armed conflict, multifaceted challenges and a history of authoritarian rule. Determined to build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic nation on the basis of rule of law, justice and national reconciliation, which were essential to upholding human rights in the long term, his Government had acceded to several international human rights instruments; signed on to a decent work country programme with the International Labour Organization; and adopted a national sustainable development plan in an effort to implement the 2030 Agenda. It was also working closely with United Nations agencies and national, regional and international partners, including non-governmental and civil society organizations, to combat transnational crime and enhance numerous social development sectors. Moreover, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission was pursuing independent efforts to promote the rights of citizens.

44. The humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State was a major challenge that had given rise to questions of accountability, drawing international attention and creating enormous pressure on the country. Sympathizing with the plight of displaced persons, his Government had signed bilateral agreements with Bangladesh to establish a verification and repatriation process and was ready to receive returnees, 6,000 of whom were expected to be repatriated in the near future. It was working with the relevant United Nations entities on the second phase of a needs assessment project and had already implemented most of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. In addition, the recently established Independent Commission of Enquiry had already begun to investigate allegations of human rights violations and atrocities committed in the state.

45. **Ms. Begala** (Cameroon) recalling the upcoming review of measures outlined in General Assembly resolution [68/268](#) and the need to examine additional measures to further strengthen and enhance the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, said that her country had used the optional simplified

reporting procedure for its most recent reports to three international human rights treaty bodies. The procedure not only led to greater efficiencies for and effectiveness of national mechanisms entrusted with drafting periodic reports, it also lightened the burden on monitoring mechanisms, thereby helping to reduce delays in the examination of State reports. Applying the same procedure to other reports would therefore further strengthen treaty body effectiveness and efficiency.

46. The growing number of States parties to international human rights instruments illustrated the global, regional and national evolution towards placing human rights at the centre of sustainable development issues. Cameroon was committed to helping to strengthen and enhance the functioning of the treaty body system by continuing to submit its reports on time, in both its official languages. In return, those bodies should take appropriate measures to reduce the ever-growing timeframe between the submission and the defence of periodic country reports. Such efforts on both sides were necessary to ensure progress in the protection of human rights.

47. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine), extending his delegation's deepest sympathies to those who had lost loved ones in the recent massacre in the city of Kerch in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine, and wishing a speedy recovery to those injured as a result of the attack, said that Ukraine strictly adhered to its obligations and commitments under international human rights law and was fully committed to promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms on its entire territory, within internationally recognized borders.

48. As a result of Russian armed aggression, Ukraine needed the continued and active involvement of human rights mechanisms, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), to monitor the serious deterioration in the human rights situation in the occupied territories. The most recent report of the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine ([A/HRC/39/CRP.4](#)) outlined persistent non-cooperation by the Russian Federation with OHCHR; its failure, as the occupying Power, to respect its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law; and widespread violations of the fundamental rights and freedoms of people living on the peninsula, including the arbitrary detention of Ukrainian citizens and their unlawful transfer to the territory of the Russian Federation.

49. Although the Kremlin continued to ignore appeals with regard to specific detainees by international organizations, political leaders and civil society,

including the previous High Commissioner and Human Rights Council special procedures mandate holders, it was hoped that the issue would remain a focus of the United Nations human rights system.

50. Continued denial of access to the Crimean peninsula meant that the mission's reports reflected only a portion of the human rights violations and repressions carried out by occupation authorities. Systematic denial of access to critical areas and facilities in the Donbass region also impeded its ability to monitor human rights abuses there, including killings, arbitrary and incommunicado detentions, torture and ill-treatment, as well as indiscriminate shelling and anti-personnel mines.

51. **Ms. Tuffa** (Ethiopia) said that her country had ratified almost all the major international human rights instruments and had made them an integral part of its legislation, because the core values and principles of human rights enshrined therein should be embraced and upheld by all States. The Constitution of Ethiopia gave equal recognition to the fundamental, interdependent and mutually reinforcing rights and freedoms of individuals and groups, which each organ of the State, at all levels, were expected to promote, respect and fulfil. Her Government had already implemented its first national human rights action plan and adopted a second for the period 2016–2020, integrating the recommendations given during its universal periodic review. It had also completed and presented its outstanding reports under key international and regional human rights instruments.

52. The implementation of successive development policies that provided directions for human rights-centred activities and mechanisms through stronger collaboration with all stakeholders had significantly reduced poverty and enhanced overall development activities. The extraordinary pace and breadth of changes in Ethiopia included making peace with Eritrea after two decades of hostility and numerous reforms aimed at widening the political space for democracy and civic action, to ensure a more participatory, accountable and transparent system.

53. **Ms. Makwabe** (South Africa) said that her delegation had worked to enhance the effective functioning of the treaty body system and to implement the Addis Ababa guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies. However, it had concerns regarding the responsibility placed on the monitoring bodies in implementing the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisals, given the immense workload alluded to in the reports.

54. Notwithstanding its positive aspects, digital technology had facilitated the spread of hate movements, including neo-Nazism; South Africa therefore recommended that Member States take legal measures to criminalize such expressions. In its work to combat contemporary forms of racism through legislation, the country was building on its solid institutional and legal framework. The Government was concerned about existing gaps in international law, particularly with respect to the issue of incitement through social media, and was also in the process of finalizing a national action plan to combat racism.

55. Despite voluntary measures from tech companies, such as codes of conduct, contemporary forms of racism were on the rise. In line with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, South Africa called on Member States and United Nations agencies to combat racism and to develop additional protocols to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

56. **Ms. Inanc-Ornekol** (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 ten 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.

57. Turkish Cypriots and the Government of Turkey had demonstrated their political will for a solution. Turkish Cypriots had overwhelmingly voted for the Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem (or the Annan Plan) and had participated in the recent talks, which had ended without an agreement. Nevertheless, Turkish Cypriots continued to experience unacceptable isolation, which the Member States should end by establishing direct economic, commercial, social and cultural relations without further delay.

58. 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 political propaganda purposes undermined the excellent work of that Committee.

59. The Immovable Property Commission, endorsed by 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.

60. 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.

61. **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 "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 44 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.

62. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation appreciated the condolences expressed in response to the recent tragedy in the city of Kerch, Crimea. The Ukrainian representative appeared to have confused the location of Kerch, which was in the Republic of Crimea and was therefore part of the Russian Federation.

63. In response to other provocative comments made by the Ukrainian delegation, he said that the Russian Federation complied with all its obligations under international human rights treaties. The Russian Constitution and legislation were applicable to the entire territory of the Russian Federation, including the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol. Once relevant competent bodies in the Russian Federation had examined all information on violations of human rights and freedoms, measures were taken to address the situation and bring to justice those responsible for offences. Monitoring of the human rights situation, including in the Republic of Crimea, was carried out by the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and its regional offices.

64. He called on the Ukrainian authorities to finally address the human rights situation in Ukraine, where the manifold violations of human rights had been well documented, not least by various monitoring bodies. The Russian Federation considered the Ukrainian delegation's attempt once more to submit a draft resolution on Crimea that was completely detached from reality as an act of unfriendly provocation that politicized the Third Committee's work. He encouraged delegations to oppose the initiative.

65. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine) said that his delegation reiterated its position, which was in line with international law, that the Russian Federation was occupying the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. It also occupied Ukrainian territory in the Donbass region. The view of the Russian Federation that Ukraine committed grave human rights violations was probably due to ongoing propaganda in Russian mass media and on Russian television. It was unprecedented and regrettable for a country to commit acts of aggression against another State and not be able to admit that it was doing so. It was obvious to all that Ukraine was suffering under Russian occupation. The Ukrainian delegation encouraged the Russian Federation to continue with their statements regarding Ukraine, as they clearly revealed to all the delegations and to the country's closest neighbours — which feared the Russian Federation — the real situation in the Russian Federation and its true position.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.