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President: Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

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

Agenda item 5: High-level segment (*continued*)
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(a) Ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*)

General debate (continued)

1. **The President** invited the ministerial meeting to resume the general debate on the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

2. **Ms. Nzenza** (Zimbabwe), Minister for Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, said that, following a reform of the election process in 2018, Zimbabwe had entered a new democratic stage and was ready for re-engagement with the international community. The primary aim of the Government was to stamp out corruption, which had badly undermined progress towards sustainable development in the past. An anti-corruption committee had been established, with eight commissioners having been recently sworn in by the President. Although progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals was generally on track in the country, inequality and a difficult economic situation presented major challenges. The Government was therefore seeking partnerships, including with financial institutions. Climate change was another major challenge. In March 2019, a devastating cyclone had caused massive damage to the country, which had already been stricken by a drought, and resources that had been set aside for social protection programmes had been depleted. The country’s capacities were therefore limited.

3. **Mr. Chhieng** (Cambodia), Minister attached to the Prime Minister and Secretary General of the Rehabilitation and Development Board, said that peace and political stability as well as a balanced development model that delivered economic, social and environmental objectives were central to ensuring empowerment and inclusion. Such a model was at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and was a hallmark of his Government’s approach. Like other lower middle-income countries, Cambodia was experiencing structural changes and facing challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation. His Government had sought to implement the principle of leaving no one behind, empower people and foster inclusiveness through policies to ensure income security, improve technical and vocational education, increase social protections for the elderly,

implement climate change mitigation and align government activities with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government would continue to seek the engagement of all stakeholders, including businesses, civil society and citizens, and pursue a whole-of-government approach in those efforts.

4. **Ms. Jaramillo** (Panama), Minister of Social Development, said that the current Government of Panama was firmly committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The action plan on sustainable development was based on education, good governance, the rule of law, and a competitive economy that generated employment and reduced poverty and inequality. Inequality persisted at the level of basic needs, including in terms of access to health services, clean water and energy. Addressing that inequality was imperative to ensure people’s well-being. Panama had taken major steps to implement the 2030 Agenda, including by updating the legal framework on governance, developing tools to measure progress and adapting national development plans.

5. Understanding that human rights were a tool for sustainable development could transform societies. The 2030 Agenda offered a comprehensive approach to human needs and should be adapted to activities at the local level. Partnerships were needed between Governments, the private sector, academia and civil society to achieve the Goals. In that regard, measures must be taken to help all stakeholders act together. In the light of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, to be held in September 2019, Panama reaffirmed its commitment to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

6. **Mr. Sayed-Khaiyum** (Fiji), Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications, said that the voluntary national review of Fiji had highlighted the small island developing State’s actions to promote peace in turbulent regions around the world and passionately fight for climate action. The review had revealed that Fiji had laid a strong foundation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The country had gained a robust infrastructure network, attained an unprecedented economic position and developed great potential in its human capital. However, those advances were only the first phase. To achieve true and enduring sustainable development, that foundation must be built upon so that, for example, Fijians living with disabilities could thrive, more young women could pursue professional careers and a culture of entrepreneurship could take hold. A new, blue economy was needed to seize opportunities in aquaculture and green shipping, and to rejuvenate coral reefs. He called on the United Nations system to provide

the cohesive and comprehensive support that would be needed to bring Fiji to the next level. He urged development partners to find affordable blended financing solutions, for example by building on the sovereign green bond issued by Fiji and developing “blue bonds” that would finance ocean-related projects to allow the country to protect itself from climate disasters. He called on developed nations to condemn and counteract debt-trap diplomacy by supporting small island developing States with sustainable financing solutions.

7. **Ms. Djukić Dejanović** (Serbia), Minister without Portfolio in charge of Demography and Population Policy, said that Serbia had presented its first voluntary national review that year. The Government viewed the European Union accession process as the road to strengthen democracy in Serbia, achieve greater stability and advance all three dimensions of sustainable development. The deep structural reforms it was implementing with the goal of leaving no one behind focused on quality education, decent work, economic growth and reducing inequalities. Actions aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and implementing the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change supported the country’s progress towards sustainability. Serbia had hosted a subregional conference on promoting progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in September 2018, a conference that had brought together representatives of Governments, the private sector, academia, civil society, international financial institutions and development partners. The conference had highlighted activities that supported the efficient and effective achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Serbia was devoted to the promotion of peace and the creation of prosperous and secure living conditions for everyone, everywhere.

8. **Mr. Kaboré** (Burkina Faso), Minister of Economy, Finances and Development, said that, the previous day, Burkina Faso had presented its first voluntary national review, which covered its progress and challenges in respect of sustainable development. In 2016, the Government had launched an economic and social development plan to transform the economy, based on the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. As a result, some 6,300 school classrooms had been built, 13 higher education institutions had been established and nearly 88,000 jobs had been created. Furthermore, through a programme focused on stimulating economies at the local level, his Government was combating poverty by

helping communities generate wealth and realize their potential.

9. Terrorist activity had plagued the north of Burkina Faso since 2015 and had since spread to other areas, threatening the country’s territorial integrity. The situation undermined progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. As of May 2019, 933 schools had closed, 25,000 refugees had been received in the country and 150,000 people had been internally displaced. An internal conflict in 2019 had further exacerbated conditions and increased the number of internally displaced persons. The Government had developed a strong response to terrorist activity in the form of the Sahel Emergency Programme, which aimed to strengthen security and address the humanitarian consequences of terrorism. A regional counter-terrorism plan inspired by the Marshall Plan, with priorities defined by Governments and the Group of 5 for the Sahel, was needed in West Africa. The people and Government of Burkina Faso were grateful for the security assistance provided by the United Nations system.

10. **Mr. Alhamer** (Bahrain), Minister of Housing, said that his Government had included the Sustainable Development Goals in its policies and programmes. Public expenditure in the areas of health, education and social security amounted to 32 per cent of the total budget. The Government had also established a committee to monitor progress towards the Goals, and ministries and other government entities were directed to align their objectives, plans and policies under the government action plan with the Goals.

11. With regard to Goal 4, basic compulsory education was provided free of charge. The primary and secondary school enrolment rates were 100 per cent and 86.4 per cent, respectively, while the preschool education enrolment rate was 74 per cent. Illiteracy had been eradicated. The Government had also included persons with disabilities in the educational system since 1986, and it had launched projects on digital empowerment and the safe use of technology to improve the quality and effectiveness of education. In terms of Goal 8, the Government sought to diversify the sources of economic revenue; the private sector had thus become a major partner in development. The Kingdom also implemented development projects that aimed to enhance the country’s competitiveness and attract investment, which would lead to growth and development.

12. In relation to Goal 10, his Government supported women victims of domestic violence and people with special needs; upheld the rights of foreign workers,

whom it provided with health insurance and shelter and protected from arbitrary dismissal; and had taken steps to combat human trafficking. With reference to Goal 11, five new towns were being built to house 36,000 low-income families, as well as divorced and single women. With regard to Goal 13, governmental institutions and committees had been created to balance environmental protection with economic and social development needs in various policies, strategies and regulations. In pursuit of Goal 16, the Government was committed to combating corruption, safeguarding public funds and preserving the independence of the judicial system and sought to promote a culture of dialogue and respect for the norms and laws governing individual and religious freedoms,

13. **Ms. Andersson** (Finland), Minister of Education, said that her Government aimed to transform Finland into a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society by 2030, including through the long-standing work of its national commission for sustainable development. In that regard, a key objective was to make the country carbon neutral by 2035 and carbon negative shortly thereafter, through a just transition that combined investments in education and social welfare with an ambitious climate policy. Raising the educational level of the population as a whole would also close equality gaps, guarantee continuous learning opportunities for all, and foster inclusion, well-being, creativity, critical thinking and innovation, which were the keys to implementing the 2030 Agenda. Education was also critical to meet the new demands of rapidly developing technology. The Government would also devote special attention to gender equality by increasing pay transparency and enhancing access to equal parental leave. Since Finland had presented its voluntary national review in 2016, sustainable development had been integrated into the State budget and an independent evaluation of the implementation of both domestic and international policies related to the 2030 Agenda had been conducted, ensuring that evidence-based information was available.

14. The findings of the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report must be taken seriously. In that regard, her Government affirmed that such independent reporting must continue and cover the next four-year period of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Finland fully supported the reforms of the United Nations proposed by the Secretary-General with the aim of leaving no one behind. Finland had begun its third presidency of the Council of the European Union and in that capacity would prioritize strengthening the rule of law and the role of the European Union as a global leader in climate action.

15. **Mr. Regenvanu** (Vanuatu), Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade, said that his Government gave a high priority to achieving universal access to quality education, with a focus on increasing the number of years students spent in school, improving the quality of education and extending tuition support programmes to the entire period from early childhood education to the last year of secondary school. The Government had also sought to promote decent work by expanding business and employment opportunities, including by deepening the integration of the tourism sector into the economy in rural areas, where most people resided. It was also facilitating the participation of non-skilled Ni-Vanuatu workers in the international labour markets available to them, particularly in Australia and New Zealand. With regard to Goal 10, on reducing inequality, the Government was partnering with the United Nations Development Programme to enable greater participation of women in Parliament, was investing, with the Government of Australia, to develop skills in tourism, handicrafts and marketing, and was working to empower persons with disabilities.

16. Vanuatu had great cultural diversity and its people prided themselves on their peaceful country, thriving democracy and independent justice system. The biggest threat to the country's sustainable development was climate change. Vanuatu had experienced at first hand how extreme weather patterns could reverse years of economic development in a matter of hours when, in 2015, a tropical cyclone had devastated the country, costing it over 60 per cent of its gross domestic product. A half-hearted approach to Goal 17 on climate change had dire implications for the other Goals, particularly those related to good health and well-being, zero hunger, clean water, resilient infrastructures, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities, healthy and productive oceans, and quality of life. Unless every State committed to the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C and the financial targets set out in the Paris Agreement, efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda would be in vain.

17. **Mr. Mokaila** (Botswana), Minister of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism, said that his Government had sought to further align the Sustainable Development Goals with sectoral policies and strategies through the midterm review of the national development plan. The focus of the 2030 Agenda on people, prosperity, planet, and peace and partnerships had been integrated into the national medium- and long- -term development frameworks and a steering committee had been established to institutionalize the Goals. His Government's vision of

prosperity for all by 2036 encapsulated the concept of leaving no one behind. Efforts were being made to strengthen the capacity of data providers to better report on indicators and an implementation plan on Goal 4 had been developed with the aim of preparing the education system to support the transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based one. In addition, an employment policy was being developed in order to tackle the challenge of high youth unemployment and the need to adapt skills training provided by educational institutions to the changing demands of the job market.

18. As a country with a semi-arid environment and a resource-based economy, Botswana was highly vulnerable to the threat of climate change. In that regard, he reaffirmed his Government's commitment to the Paris Agreement and the Katowice Rulebook. A national policy on climate change would also be considered in Parliament and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 had been mainstreamed into the national disaster risk management strategy. He thanked development partners for the support provided to Botswana in the spirit of Goal 17.

19. **Mr. Fofana** (Guinea), Minister of Justice, said that the high-level political forum should devote particular attention to the least developed countries and fragile States when assessing progress towards sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals served as the unifying framework for his Government's development policies and strategies, most notably, Guinea Vision 2040, which also incorporated Agenda 2063 and had been developed with the participation of civil society, the private sector, youth, women and development partners. The first phase of Guinea Vision 2040 was the implementation of the 2016–2020 economic and social development plan, which was based on good governance, lasting and inclusive economic transformation, the inclusive development of human capital and the sustainable management of natural capital. Assessments of the implementation of the plan, including the voluntary national report presented by Guinea in 2018, had revealed advances in the rural sector, food security, socioeconomic infrastructure and governance of public finances.

20. The major challenges to development included the achievement of strong, inclusive and sustainable growth, better use of the demographic dividend and better environmental management. In that regard, the Government had created two agencies to support development at the local level and improve the distribution of wealth, in particular through the allocation of 15 per cent of mining revenues to local governments and the direct transfer of funds to vulnerable people in rural areas. In the long term, those

initiatives would improve communities' access to basic social services and strengthen technical and institutional capacity at the local level. Lastly, his Government had made every effort to empower people by enhancing access to justice over the preceding decade.

21. **Mr. da Fonseca** (Angola), Minister of Economy and Planning, said that, to address the economic and financial fallout from the recession that had begun in 2016 in Angola, the Government was implementing a macroeconomic stabilization plan and was receiving financial and technical support from the International Monetary Fund through its Extended Fund Facility. The Government's long-term strategy for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals included actions aimed at generating opportunities for economic growth through private sector development, reducing inequalities and promoting social inclusion and well-being. Shorter-term programmes were aimed at achieving macroeconomic and fiscal stability, improving the quality of education and health services, building infrastructure and eliminating hunger. Such programmes were funded on an annual basis through the State budget and many were directly modelled on the Goals. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda would be an intrinsic aspect of the next chapter of the development of Angola as it became a middle-income nation.

22. **Mr. García** (Uruguay), Head of the Office of Planning and Budget, said that Uruguay had presented its third national voluntary review that year, thereby reporting on all the Sustainable Development Goals. Uruguay was the most egalitarian country in the Latin American and Caribbean region, with a Gini coefficient of 0.382, and was internationally recognized for its promotion of decent work and uninterrupted economic growth over the previous 15 years, during which time it had also invested in quality public schooling at all levels. The national climate change response system had been in place for 10 years to prevent and mitigate risk and promote adaptation activities. Indeed, the country's climate action policies had become an international benchmark. The discussion of climate change at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2019 would be crucial.

23. The Sustainable Development Goals were not only a State responsibility; they required the active participation of citizens, civil society, workers and the private sector. His Government therefore promoted discussion of the Goals in a range of forums and the participation of academia in the provision of accurate and scientifically rigorous information on progress towards the Goals. The 2030 Agenda had also been incorporated into the Government budget cycle,

strategic planning and policy monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and adapted to local and regional government activities. At a time when the world was struggling with a volatile international economy and religious and cultural intolerance, Uruguay upheld the critical values of respect for equality and for civil, political and social rights.

24. **Mr. Ağbal** (Turkey), Chief of Strategy and Budget of the Presidency, said that education was linked to nearly all of the Sustainable Development Goals and was critical to empowerment, inclusiveness and equality. Given that nearly 40 per cent of the Turkish population was under the age of 24, youth offered the greatest potential for the country's development. The Government viewed inclusive and quality education that offered lifelong learning opportunities as a priority. Efforts to increase the school attendance of girls had increased the net schooling rates at all levels. The needs of students with disabilities had also been addressed through improvements to physical infrastructure and the strengthening of human resources. Recognizing the key role education played in stimulating employment and economic growth, the Government had supported linkages between schools and the private sector. It had also implemented measures to increase employment rates among women, youth and persons with disabilities. Effective social policies to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and ensure gender equality sought to distribute the country's prosperity; the average annual growth rate of Turkey had been 5.5 per cent over the previous 17 years.

25. Given its location in the Mediterranean basin, Turkey was greatly affected by climate change and considered adaptation measures, particularly those that increased the resilience of vulnerable groups, to be vital. Turkey was host to nearly 4 million refugees, and provided them with shelter, and free health care, education and social protection. In line with the principle of leaving no one behind, Turkey had exceeded its commitment to the least developed countries, providing assistance that totalled \$2 billion between 2010 and 2017. In 2018, it had provided \$8.6 billion in official development assistance, surpassing the target set in the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. **Ms. Cerrato** (Honduras), Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, said that her Government had begun implementing the 2030 Agenda by incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals into the national planning system and was establishing a national commission that would lead the follow-up and monitoring of actions to achieve the Goals. With regard to the theme of the 2019 high-level political forum, Honduras faced challenges in

empowerment, inclusiveness and equality in the areas of education, employment and climate action, which were her Government's priorities. In that regard, a strategic plan for the education sector for the period 2018–2030 had been approved, which articulated the transformations required. A task force on youth employment generation had been established, and over 100,000 new opportunities had been created in 2018. A new strategic plan had been devised with the goal of improving the living conditions and productivity of all Hondurans

27. The effects of climate change were evident in Honduras: major climate events, including flooding and drought, had been occurring more frequently and with greater intensity. The Government's climate agenda took into account human rights and the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, including women, indigenous peoples and Afro-Honduran people. The 2030 Agenda recognized the effects of violence on development and poverty reduction. The violence in Central America resulted to a large degree from the market for drugs in North America and the production of those drugs in South America. Honduras accepted its share of the responsibility for the violence, but its geographic location had made it a victim of a phenomenon in which it would not otherwise have played any part. Great strides had been made in reducing insecurity in the country, including a reduction in the homicide rate.

28. **Mr. Moir** (Guatemala), Secretary of Planning and Programming of the Presidency, said that the experience of Guatemala offered a number of considerations for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. First, implementation required public institutions, policies and programmes to be reconfigured, which made a major demand on Governments. Non-governmental stakeholders also needed to consolidate their role and progressively identify their contributions to sustainable development, complementing government efforts. Local governments had a key role to play in bridging social and economic divides, and, in that regard, their capacities and institutional structures should be strengthened. Data, statistics and tools that supported informed and strategic decision-making were a major State need. Transnational issues, such as organized crime, migration and the effects of climate change, whose impact varied from country to country, should be approached as shared responsibilities on a differentiated basis at the regional level.

29. A greater commitment to financing for development was needed so that private investment, trade, sustainable debt and the transfer of technology could complement initiatives related to domestic resources and official development assistance.

Guatemala was wholly committed to mobilizing domestic resources while ensuring that international and non-State contributions were effective and sufficient. It was critical that the technical and financial support provided by international partners, the private sector and civil society was aligned with State-defined priorities. In particular, the principles of effective cooperation set out in the Paris Agreement and endorsed by the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation must be respected. Lastly, greater clarity was required regarding the opportunities for official development assistance and how such assistance could best contribute to a country's development, based on its actual needs. His Government attached great importance to the global development framework developed by Member States, which included the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the New Urban Agenda.

30. **Mr. de Laiglesia González de Peredo** (Spain), Secretary of State for International Cooperation and for Latin America and the Caribbean, said that his Government was fully committed to the 2030 Agenda, which played a central role in its political project. Under the national action plan to implement the Agenda, a programme on energy and climate, and national strategies on poverty prevention, equality of opportunities, science and technology and the demographic challenge had been adopted. The Spanish international cooperation agency had also based its strategic objectives on the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government was monitoring the action plan indicators and would present a progress report at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2019, with the aim of strengthening accountability. He encouraged other Member States to adopt that practice. The Government had sought the input of civil society, local governments, the private sector and academia to devise its action plan, and affirmed the critical need for leadership from local and regional governments to achieve the Goals. Spain had hosted a high-level meeting on localizing the 2030 Agenda, which had included the participation of the Deputy Secretary-General and had led to the adoption of the Seville Commitment. Spain also strove to maintain the Agenda as a priority in the policies of the European Union and regional organizations and in its own bilateral relationships.

31. The Government had developed a new institutional governance structure, which included a high commission for the 2030 Agenda within the President's office. The high-level group on the Agenda had been strengthened to ensure the participation of

such leading political decision-makers as the Vice-President and ministers. A national council on sustainable development had also been established to coordinate public participation and input. In effect, the Sustainable Development Goals were improving public policy and making cooperation frameworks more effective. He reaffirmed the commitment of Spain to multilateralism, international law, and the people-centred development model embodied in the 2030 Agenda.

32. **Mr. Kang Jeong-sik** (Republic of Korea), Deputy Minister for Multilateral and Global Affairs, said that the momentum that had led to the unanimous adoption of the 2030 Agenda must be sustained, as the world was not on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Conflict and instability had intensified in many areas, putting hard-won progress at risk. His Government had embraced inclusiveness as a core value and as a driver of sustainable development. In that regard, it had expanded access to social services, invested in people through quality education, increased the minimum wage, enhanced vocational training and empowered marginalized groups, including women and people with disabilities. There were also continuous efforts to localize the Sustainable Development Goals, including the development of a monitoring mechanism tailored to the priorities of the Republic of Korea. His Government had also strengthened global partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders and planned to more than double its official development assistance by 2030. Its development cooperation programmes had also been restructured to meet the demands of the 2030 Agenda.

33. **Mr. Pankin** (Russian Federation), Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum had been held in June 2019 with the participation of 145 States and the Secretary-General. Participants had affirmed that there was no one-size-fits-all approach to achieve sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of exchanging best practices, including within the Council. The Russian Federation was integrating the 2030 Agenda into its development strategy for the period up to 2024. Scientific forecasts for the global economy, including the exponential rate of development of technology and the fourth industrial revolution, had been considered when determining the 12 national priority areas under the strategy, which included health care, education, employment and economic growth.

34. The Russian Federation would present the results of its efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in 2020. Goal 4 on education and Goal 8 on decent jobs were mutually reinforcing and must be pursued together, taking into account the rights and interests of

workers and using information and communications technology as an opportunity to enhance training. The Russian Federation reaffirmed its commitment to the targets set under the Paris Agreement, which were linked to Goal 13. The response to climate change required coordination and realistic actions. In that respect, a promising area of work was the development of nature-inspired technologies. That had been the topic of the second Global Manufacturing and Industrialization Summit, held in Yekaterinburg, Russian Federation, with the participation of the Russian President and the Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Tangible progress in the reduction of inequalities among and within countries, in line with Goal 10, was hindered by the illegal imposition of unilateral sanctions, protectionism and trade wars. Solutions to inequality should be pursued in the creation of open cooperation between nations, including through such regional organizations as the Eurasian Economic Union.

35. **Ms. El Ouafi** (Morocco), Secretary of State in charge of Sustainable Development, said that, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, her Government had developed a road map that included both domestic and international initiatives. The Constitution of 2011 offered a framework to strengthen public policy on the environment and sustainable development. Strategic plans and programmes related to renewable energy, agriculture, fishing and tourism sought to strengthen the economy while taking into account environmental considerations. The Government was fighting all forms of discrimination against women, including through the establishment of schools. On the environmental front, national plans related to waste recycling and the reduction of industrial and air pollution were being implemented. In 2017, the Council of Ministers had adopted a national strategy, prepared in consultation with academia, the private sector and civil society, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. A cross-cutting plan for governance in sustainable development, in addition to sectoral strategies, had also been established.

36. **Mr. Savanphet** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that, in order to ensure that no one was left behind, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda should take into account the development priorities of countries in special situations, including least developed countries and land-locked developing countries. His Government was determined to achieve its development objectives, with a particular focus on addressing poverty. Ambitious targets had been set to graduate from the least developed country category. In that regard, the Government had

been working closely with the United Nations country team to localize the Sustainable Development Goals and had established a steering committee chaired by the Prime Minister, a secretariat, and focal points in various ministries and agencies. Over 60 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators had been incorporated into the national development plan and key indicators would be mainstreamed into the 2021–2025 socioeconomic development plan. The Government had also engaged stakeholders in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and raised awareness of the Goals. It had mapped the data related to all the localized indicators to ensure that resources were allocated effectively to support data collection. A persistent challenge was the shortage of funding to support the implementation of initiatives related to the Agenda. In that respect, the Government had sought to intensify its domestic and external resource mobilization and enhance cooperation. He thanked development partners for their continued assistance.

37. **Mr. Barros** (Cabo Verde), Vice Minister of Finance, said that the high-level political forum should be more than a formality. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019 clearly stated that political commitment to achieving the Goals was lacking and no country was on track to achieve all of them. Cabo Verde remained firmly committed to implementing its strategic plan for sustainable development for the period 2017–2021, which was aligned with the 2030 Agenda and set out a vision to transform the islands into a mid-Atlantic gateway to the world. The implementation of the strategic plan would sustainably ensure social inclusion and reduce inequalities. The plan relied on private-sector-led growth, emphasizing the role played by the country's diaspora. Significant efforts had been made to improve the country's capacity to mobilize domestic resources through additional fiscal revenue generation, and the Government was fostering private investment to boost job creation and sustainable economic growth. Development partners and representatives of the private sector had pledged support to Cabo Verde at a conference held in December 2018, at which the Government had presented a portfolio of transformative projects. Fulfilment of those pledges and the continued support of development partners would accelerate the implementation of critical reforms to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The success of a recent forum to mobilize private-sector investment in the country had validated the Government's strategy.

38. **Ms. Nikolova** (Bulgaria), Vice Minister of Environment and Water, said that the Sustainable Development Goals must be considered in an integrated

manner that took into account all dimensions of sustainable development. Regarding Goal 13 on climate action, Bulgaria had enacted a law on climate change mitigation in 2014 and was implementing its third national action plan on climate change, which included specific measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors. As a result, those emissions had greatly decreased and the share of renewable sources in the country's gross final energy consumption had reached 18 per cent. Bulgaria had also developed a climate change adaptation strategy and action plan that encompassed environmental, social and economic issues. Goal 4 on education was closely related to climate action. Environmental education was crucial to raising public awareness, promoting environmentally responsible patterns of production and consumption, and building a new culture of proactive environmental thinking and behaviour. In that regard, Bulgaria had established environmental education standards beginning at the primary school level. Education was critical in all activities related to the Goals, including improving health, fostering innovation, promoting peaceful societies and building meaningful partnerships. In that regard, her Government had taken inter-institutional action to lower the dropout rate and improve education for children with special learning needs.

39. **Mr. Jidin** (Malaysia), Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs, said that Malaysia was committed to fostering inclusive development through its five-year development agenda, which aimed to provide equal opportunities for all Malaysians. Malaysia had succeeded in drastically reducing poverty from about 50 per cent in 1970 to 0.4 per cent in 2016, while the mean monthly household income had grown by an average of 7.4 per cent per year between 1970 and 2016. Recognizing that development efforts should improve the standard of living, the Government had implemented initiatives to maintain low unemployment and inflation rates, ensure access to education and health services and provide more affordable housing. The Government would continue to ensure that the benefits of growth were distributed equitably, including through a new shared prosperity plan which, in the spirit of leaving no one behind, aimed at providing a decent standard of living to all Malaysians by 2030. In October 2019, Malaysia would host the Seventh Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, which would offer States in the region an opportunity to exchange ideas and explore innovative solutions to make cities of the future more sustainable and resilient.

40. **Mr. Nguyen Van Trung** (Viet Nam), Vice Minister of Planning and Investment, said that the biggest

challenge Viet Nam faced in implementing the 2030 Agenda was mobilizing sufficient financial resources. In that respect, the Government was making public investments based on the principle that they served as a catalyst to attract private investments. Ministries, agencies and provincial governments selected projects in accordance with their own action plans. The Government also sought to improve the business environment to encourage private investment and implemented policies that helped businesses improve their competitiveness and technological capacity and integrate into national and global value chains. In respect of foreign direct investment, the focus was on quality over quantity. Preparations for an anticipated reduction in official development assistance were under way.

41. **Mr. Kuberski** (Poland), Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, said that, in 2017, his Government had adopted a strategy for responsible development focused on improving the standard of living in the country, which it considered to be a long-term investment. Policies to support the poor and marginalized had increased per capita income in the poorest sector of the population by about 40 per cent, and the percentage of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion had reached a historic low of 17 per cent in 2017. A programme aimed at increasing the accessibility of public spaces and services was also under way. The Government prioritized inclusive economic development and employment growth. The gross domestic product had grown an average of 4 per cent annually over the previous four years and unemployment rates were at an all-time low. Many Polish citizens were returning from abroad, which would also benefit the economy. Poland remained committed to climate action and, together with the European Union, would make the world's most ambitious contribution to the Paris Agreement.

42. **Ms. Niuma** (Maldives), Deputy Minister of National Planning and Infrastructure, said that her Government's development policy was based on people and sustainability, with the aim of achieving development in harmony with the ocean. As it prepared to launch a 10-year development plan that fully integrated the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government would count on the support of international partners, including United Nations bodies, to strengthen national population and development data systems and help track progress and accelerate action where it was most needed. Achieving true gender equality would require intensive efforts; initial steps included the adoption of legislation on the protection of women and a quota to ensure more women in leadership positions,

including 35 per cent of the Cabinet. The increasing disparity in the quality of the services received by residents of the country's different islands owing to geographic challenges must also be addressed. In that regard, the Government would launch a robust programme on inter-island connectivity and decentralization. Major improvements in the education and health sectors, including to increase access to emergency care, were also under way.

43. The Government remained committed to strengthening its governance and justice systems and had embarked on an ambitious agenda to improve accountability and transparency. The Maldives faced many challenges to economic development, including the fact that most commercial projects could not achieve economies of scale. People were dependent on imports for essential items, making the economy highly vulnerable and volatile to external shocks. The Government was focusing heavily on building a blue economy that was sustainable, resilient and inclusive, and on diversifying the economy and reducing dependence on fossil fuels. However, those efforts would amount to little when the country faced the catastrophic effects of climate change. It was crucial that the international community understand the particular vulnerabilities of small island developing States like the Maldives, where years of hard-earned economic growth could be washed away with a single natural disaster. She called on the international community to honour the commitments made in the Paris Agreement, to ensure that global temperatures did not rise by more than 1.5°C. She also called for concrete measures to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks, as agreed under the Sendai Framework.

44. **Mr. Al Blooshi** (United Arab Emirates), Under Secretary of Community Development, said that his Government was guided by the conviction that readiness to embrace technological change would be critical to its ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Such future-proofing had become the cornerstone of its strategic planning and day-to-day activities. The happiness and well-being of citizens was another national guiding framework for development. He proposed that the Goals be similarly understood at the international level, as a means to achieve the happiness and well-being of humanity.

45. The United Arab Emirates had recently hosted a preparatory meeting for the Climate Action Summit to be held in September 2019. One of the major conclusions of the meeting was that climate action offered unprecedented opportunities to improve people's lives while generating economic growth. Most significantly, renewable energy sources had become the

cheapest source of power in many countries, including his own. There was a clear business case for acting on the commitments made under the Paris Agreement. Climate action would also improve human health, for example by reducing the number of deaths caused by air pollution, which currently stood at 7 million annually. The international community must convey such messages regarding the economic and social benefits of climate action.

46. **Mr. Borbély** (Romania), Counsellor of State, Head of the Department of Sustainable Development, said that the Romanian Parliament was a strong advocate for the 2030 Agenda. In 2016, Romania had been the first State member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to adopt a political declaration calling for the national implementation of the Agenda, and, in 2017, the Office of the Prime Minister had established the Department for Sustainable Development. With the support of academia, plans were under way to establish a consultative council that would help ensure policy coherence, and an inter-institutional network was establishing sustainable development hubs within each government ministry. The Government also supported the creation of a civil society coalition for sustainable development. During its presidency of the Council of the European Union, in the first semester of 2019, Romania had steered the negotiation and adoption of strong Council conclusions regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda within the European Union. The regional dimensions of implementation, including partnerships, would be crucial in the future. In that regard, Romania had taken steps to establish regional hubs that would support cooperation by organizing meetings of the States members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Strong leadership and an effective monitoring system for the Agenda were needed at the regional and global levels. The approaching 2020 deadline for the achievement of 21 of the targets under the Agenda called for decisive political action at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, to be held in September 2019.

47. **Ms. Bokhari** (Pakistan), Parliamentary Secretary for Law and Justice, said that, in 2016, Pakistan had become the first country to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into its national development agenda. The national and provincial parliaments had established Sustainable Development Goal task forces and monitoring units to review progress, and a national framework had been launched in 2018 to optimize, prioritize and localize the full potential of the Goals. The Government was committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda through innovative, targeted and focused

strategies in the social, economic and environmental fields, with poverty eradication at the centre of its efforts. It had created a ministry of poverty alleviation and social security and had launched the largest national poverty alleviation programme in the country's history with a view to introducing a social safety net, creating jobs, developing human capital and economically empowering women, and reducing stunting in poverty-stricken communities. Ending hunger and addressing malnutrition were among the Government's priorities. Over the next five years, a strategy involving multiple stakeholders would focus on raising awareness of healthy eating practices, strengthening institutions and engaging the private sector in curbing hunger. Initiatives aimed at enhancing women's participation sought to reduce gender inequality and promote economic empowerment and economic growth. Health sector reforms included a new universal health coverage initiative.

48. The effects of climate change were hindering the country's economic progress; climate-related costs accounted for nearly 8 per cent of the national budget. In response, the Government had launched environmental protection and mitigation actions. Through the "Billion Tree" initiative, 350,000 hectares had been planted; the campaign was the first under the Bonn Challenge to surpass its commitment using national resources. The project had been expanded to restore depleted forests countrywide. Those initiatives and other national nature-based programmes for ecosystem restoration, which also improved biodiversity and created livelihoods, were leading examples of climate action in a developing country. A national approach anchored in partnerships, aided by technology and facilitated by finance, would catalyse and expand the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Pakistan.

49. **Mr. Canney** (Ireland), Minister of State in the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, said that his Government's recently adopted climate action plan covered every relevant sector and was underpinned by strong governance, citizen input and political consensus. It would put Ireland on a trajectory to meet its 2030 target for carbon emissions, which was consistent with achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. His Government had established the National Sustainable Development Goals Stakeholder Forum in 2018 to improve stakeholder participation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

50. Recognizing that the impacts of climate change would be felt disproportionately by poor and vulnerable people worldwide, Ireland was committed to assisting

the most vulnerable in adapting and building resistance. The Government's policy for international development, launched in February 2019, provided a framework to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by expanding the development programme, particularly in the areas of gender equality, humanitarian assistance, climate action and governance. The policy was in line with the commitment to reach the United Nations target of allocating 0.7 per cent of the gross national income to official development assistance by 2030. Shared responsibility and collective action were at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. Ireland sought to show leadership in achieving the Goals and would continue to meet its responsibilities globally and be guided by the principles of empathy, partnership and independence.

51. **Mr. Kadel** (Nepal), Vice-Chair, National Planning Commission, said that the gaps in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda within and among the least developed countries, land-locked developing countries and small island developing States represented a major challenge. The international community must therefore give priority to those countries. Having achieved political stability and an environment that was conducive to economic development, the Government of Nepal was focused on achieving sustainable development with the overarching vision that a prosperous country meant happy people. Nepal had achieved an annual growth rate of about 7 per cent and had reduced poverty to 18.7 per cent. The proportion of women in all three tiers of government was about 40 per cent, and the gender parity index in education remained 1.0 at the basic level and 0.99 at the secondary level.

52. The priority was to graduate from the least developed country category in a smooth and sustainable way. The Sustainable Development Goals had been mainstreamed into national plans, policies and programmes and were being localized and incorporated into the annual budget. With regard to Goal 4, a number of programmes had been implemented to enhance access to education, the retention of students and the quality of education, particularly for disadvantaged groups. On Goal 8, the Government had launched a comprehensive contribution-based social security scheme. The adverse impacts of climate change disproportionately affected Nepal, despite its negligible carbon emissions. With regard to Goal 16, Nepal had made great strides to strengthen democracy, good governance, the inclusiveness of institutions and the rule of law. The successful peace process had culminated in much-needed political stability, which would support sustainable development. Financing for sustainable development remained an important challenge: Nepal

required more than \$18 billion annually to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Public, private, domestic and international modes of financing must be leveraged to complement national efforts to leave no one behind.

53. **Ms. Krentovska** (Ukraine), First Deputy Minister of Social Policy, said that her Government had adopted a national human rights strategy in 2015 in order to ensure inclusiveness and equality and develop anti-discrimination legislation. The Government was implementing a poverty reduction strategy following the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, which had forced 1.4 million Ukrainians to resettle and had cost them their jobs and property. Other activities related to Sustainable Development Goal 1 on zero poverty and Goal 10 on reducing inequality included the 2017 pension reform, following which the average pension had increased by 70 per cent, and increases in the minimum wage and social assistance rates to assist vulnerable groups in particular.

54. The national policy to achieve Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth was intended to reduce labour migration from Ukraine through deregulation, improvements in labour legislation and support for small and medium-sized enterprises. Decentralization and local government reform initiatives included strong financial and economic incentives for local authorities to provide new jobs and improve the effectiveness of regional economies. The Government had also empowered territorial communities by providing resources to invest in human development. Legislation adopted in 2017 provided for an increase in the types of education available to all Ukrainians, including those with special educational needs. The Government had introduced a system to monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, a system which included annual reports and periodic reviews of the alignment of national legislation with the 2030 Agenda.

55. **Ms. Wursterová** (Slovakia), Director General of the Division for International Organisations, Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of Slovakia of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, said that Slovakia could not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in their entirety, but had included in its long-term national development framework six priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. While the Government was not meeting its target for official development assistance, it considered the mobilization of resources from both the public and private sectors to be essential. It had taken steps in 2019 to strengthen partnerships with the private sector by introducing new tools, including blended finance. The Government would work closely with non-

governmental organizations to ensure that its interventions were efficient, transparent and sustainable. It attached the highest priority to education, as human capital was the most important asset. Many challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals persisted: 16 per cent of students of lower secondary school age did not attend school. In many countries, the Goals were not widely known. Efforts were required to ensure that everyone took ownership of the 2030 Agenda.

56. The increase in global temperatures could have devastating impacts, especially for the poor and most vulnerable, who had contributed little to the problem. The European Union had taken a leadership role in by aiming to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. New business models were needed as part of that process. Slovakia actively supported initiatives that pursued an environmentally sustainable economy, water management and mitigation of the effects of climate change. The growing disparities among regions and within countries demonstrated that the 2030 Agenda was relevant to developed and developing nations alike. Slovakia was taking a leadership role in international organizations to advance the Agenda. As the current Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, it was determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies in line with Goal 16. In May 2019, Slovakia had chaired the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Ministerial Council Meeting on ways to harness the potential of the digital transformation for growth, well-being and sustainable development.

57. **Mr. Seneviratne** (Sri Lanka), Secretary to the President, Presidential Secretariat, said that his Government had launched several mechanisms to create an enabling environment to implement the 2030 Agenda. They included a national council on sustainable development that would formulate national strategies through a whole-of-society approach; lead the process of integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national plans and budgets; and ensure policy coherence and stakeholder engagement. Sri Lanka had made good progress towards achieving Goal 3 on good health and Goal 4 on quality education. The Government was devoting special attention to national integration and reconciliation efforts and empowering women and vulnerable groups through technical and vocational education.

58. In 2018, Sri Lanka had become the country with the second-highest level of climate risk. In order to implement adaptation plans, it needed the support of donors. Sri Lanka had a national committee in place to lower greenhouse gas emissions, despite already its

already low levels of such emissions. With regard to Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, the Government had introduced a system to fight corruption and financial fraud, and the Central Bank had introduced new guidelines to combat money-laundering and terrorist financing. Steps had also been taken to ensure that the national framework complied with the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Sri Lanka firmly supported South-South cooperation efforts and stood ready to share its experiences. He hoped that the high-level political forum would create opportunities for multilateral and bilateral cooperation.

59. **Mr. Guisse** (Senegal), Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, said that his Government had integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into its strategic planning for development. In 2016, it had adopted a national road map to align the Goals with its economic and social policy. In that regard, a number of social protection and inclusion projects and programmes had been established, including programmes that provided quarterly income to some 400,000 households, ensured universal health coverage and built basic socioeconomic infrastructure in rural areas, facilitating access to water and electricity. The latter initiative had been recognized by the United Nations for its systemic and comprehensive approach that took into account all the causes and types of inequality in rural zones. The Government prioritized the development of human capital through education and professional development. Education comprised 25 per cent of government spending, and an initiative to create jobs for women and youth had provided those groups with 45.8 million euros in funding in 2018. A number of programmes and partnerships related to climate change resilience, adaptation and mitigation had been established, including a project to increase the population of ecovillages, a 2016–2020 renewable energy strategy and a coastal management programme. In addition, the Government had institutionalized an annual meeting on sustainable development chaired by the President, which was evidence of the priority given to the issue and the participation of stakeholders at all levels. There was a need to better align and harmonize the work of the various international platforms for following up on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.