



# General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

**32<sup>nd</sup>** plenary meeting  
 Wednesday, 20 November 2019, 3 p.m.  
 New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Muhammad-Bande ..... (Nigeria)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Al Hassan (Oman), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

## High-level meeting on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

### Agenda item 66 (continued)

#### Promotion and protection of the rights of children

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now continue its high-level meeting on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Before we begin with the list of speakers, I would like to address some important organizational matters pertaining to the conduct of the plenary meetings.

As indicated in the letters of the President dated 7 November and 18 November, I would like to remind all speakers that statements should be limited to three minutes when speaking in their national capacity and to five minutes when speaking on behalf of a group.

As delegations will recall, in its resolution 72/313, of 17 September 2018, the General Assembly called for each speaker to strictly adhere to time limits in the Assembly, in particular during high-level meetings. To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the speaker's rostrum. Participants with longer statements are encouraged to read out a shorter version of their texts and to submit their full-

length statements to the Secretariat for posting on the PaperSmart portal.

Also in accordance with resolution 72/313, observance of the "all protocols observed" principle, whereby participants are encouraged to refrain from voicing standard protocol expressions during their statements, is recommended.

Bearing in mind the time limit, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a reasonable pace so that interpretation into the official United Nations languages can be provided properly.

I appeal for the cooperation of all speakers in observing the time limits for statements, so that all those inscribed can be heard in a timely manner.

**Mr. Daðason** (Iceland): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries, namely, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Iceland.

Today we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an unprecedented promise by nations to the children of the world. There has been significant progress since the adoption of the Convention in 1989. It has galvanized change and progress for children around the world. Important steps have been taken to increase equality and respect for children's rights. More children are attending school and getting an education, which provides the best safeguard against exclusion and a lack of prospects. In addition, as seen in the recent school strikes for the climate, children around the world are taking the

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lead and getting a say in matters that affect their lives and futures.

We will continue to ensure that the principles of the Convention are implemented and that the human rights of children are promoted and protected, as those rights are central to sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Nordic countries stress the crucial role of UNICEF and the United Nations in promoting the Convention on the Rights of the Child. But there is work still to be done, as we have heard this morning (see A/74/PV.31). We must all further commit to ensuring that we leave no child behind. Particular attention must be paid to children in the most vulnerable situations.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights instrument globally. In fact, one member of the Nordic family, Sweden, was one of the first countries to ratify it. The Nordic countries are proud to have made the general principles, rights and obligations under the Convention a part of our legislation. The principles of the Convention need to become a reality for all children in various situations and with varying needs. The best interests of children must always be our focus when we decide on matters that concern them. The aim of the Nordic countries is for all children, in all their diversity, to have a safe and secure childhood.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first international human rights instrument to address the protection of children from violence. The Nordic countries have emphasized the crucial importance of having the right services and responses in place when children are believed to be victims of sexual violence or other serious violence. The Barnahus model, or Children's House, where children can receive all the services they need in one place, has been implemented across the Nordic countries.

To celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention, the Nordic Council of Ministers has decided to enhance its focus on children's rights. Our aim is to make the Nordic region the best place for children to grow up. Children have a right to be heard and, earlier today, we all enjoyed the role of keynote listeners instead of keynote speakers. Children need to be listened to and involved in decisions that affect them.

Children from the Nordic countries will gather in Copenhagen in January to discuss children's rights, with a focus on their participation and involvement.

The Nordic Children's Forum will bring children together with relevant Government actors from all over the region and further develop Nordic cooperation on children's rights.

We cannot afford to be complacent. We need to strengthen our efforts to ensure that all children are safe, healthy and able to strive for their dreams.

I should now like to make some remarks in my national capacity. When I took office as Minister, it was clear that my main focus would be the welfare and rights of children. I knew we were doing many things quite well in Iceland, but that we could also do better when it comes to children. With the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we have established a very important internationally recognized framework for children's rights and are committed to protecting those rights. It is really remarkable to see the unity here today on the importance of the Convention among politicians and Government officials around the world. But the Convention must not be only something we discuss solemnly with other national leaders, but a real tool — a compass for all societies.

In order to ensure a truly child-friendly community, children need to enjoy the rights provided by the Convention in their everyday lives. That applies to homes, schools and wherever children spend their time. Therefore, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, the Icelandic Government has decided that, at the same time as conducting a comprehensive review of services for children and their families in Iceland, it will establish extensive cooperation with UNICEF in Iceland to target the implementation of the Convention and the activities of local authorities. At the same time, we will work on systematic measurements and objectives with the so-called dashboard on the quality of children's lives, which we developed in cooperation with UNICEF in Iceland and one of the municipalities in Iceland. Municipalities will thereby be able to systematically analyse statistics on the well-being of their children and utilize policy, budgeting and decision-making with the aim of ensuring greater equality and that all decisions or measures taken by authorities concerning children are based on what is their best interests, in accordance with article 3 of the Convention.

We hope that those actions will bring the Convention rights closer to children themselves and that Iceland

will, in the very near future, become one of the best countries in the world in which to be a child.

**Ms. Nguene** (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Cameroon is pleased to join the international community today in celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly, on 20 November 1989, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the aim of recognizing and protecting the specific rights of children.

Over the 30 years since, promoting and protecting children's rights has been and remains at the very core of the Cameroonian Government's priorities. Under the high-level guidance of our Head of State, His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, our Government pursues a policy promoting the best interests of children that recognizes children as rights-holders.

At the institutional level, among other things, Cameroon ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 11 January 1993, and adopted a law criminalizing many acts harmful to children and families, such as female genital mutilation, breast flattening and the refusal to pay child support. The law also introduced innovations in the area of children's justice, which provide for alternative forms of punishment to detention.

In the area of health, Cameroon has opened new hospitals, extended vaccination coverage and established a breastfeeding week to raise awareness and promote the practice. The national action plan to combat female genital mutilation was established, while repair of obstetrical fistula, which is very common among young girls married at an early age, is free and carried out by specialist doctors. Moreover, campaigns are carried out to raise awareness against the practice of forced marriage.

In the area of education, Cameroon has expanded school catchment and recruited thousands of new teachers. We are also promoting inclusive schools and opening specialized primary schools for children with disabilities to teach Braille and sign language. In order to prevent school drop-out, primary school is not only free but also compulsory.

In the social domain, several programmes have been implemented to prevent children from ending up on the streets. Almost 2,000 street children were identified. A multisectoral team takes care of them, while responding to their specific needs. Those children are hosted by

institutions and centres to stabilize them and rebuild their personalities. They are provided training to help them reintegrate into society. Some of those children have been able to complete their baccalaureate and embark on higher education. The Government is also taking affirmative action measures for children living with disabilities.

Cameroon is a victim of attacks by the Boko Haram sect, which uses children. We have also launched a deradicalization programme to help them reintegrate into society.

With a view to enabling children to express their own concerns, Cameroon established a children's parliament where all children express their concerns, as members heard at first hand this morning from a young girl from Cameroon.

Despite our particularly difficult economic environment and security pitfalls, the situation of the rights of the child in Cameroon has shown steady progress. The public authorities are continuing these efforts together with civil-society organizations and Cameroon's development partners.

I could not conclude my remarks without mentioning a troubling problem, which is the registration of births. Since more than one third of children are not registered at birth, the Government of Cameroon, with support from several development partners, has committed to increasing the rate of registered births to 80 per cent. From 2016 to 2018, the birth registration rate in the most impacted areas increased from 22 per cent to 67 per cent.

**Ms. Koho Nlend** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Thirty years ago, the leaders of the world mobilized to adopt the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Thirteen years later, in 2002, the international community reaffirmed its ambition to build the world that children deserve. Through that gradual and fair mobilization, we recognize that children worldwide have inherent rights to dignity and self-realization. Three decades later, we can take stock and do more on their behalf. We must here renew our commitment to fully implement the Convention and promote children's rights with the awareness that they are the adults of tomorrow.

By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on 9 February 1994, Gabon fully assumed its commitments and further committed to act in accordance with its responsibilities. For my country,

protecting children and realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) go hand in hand, as the SDGs cannot be reached unless people, including children, together build a more equitable, peaceful, prosperous and secure future. With that conviction, Gabon proceeded to harmonize its legislation in order to give direct effect to the 1989 Convention and its three Optional Protocols.

In addition, Gabon's recently updated criminal code incorporates the relevant provisions of the Palermo Protocols to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, seeking, in particular, to deter crimes committed against children. In the same vein, my country, under the guidance of His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic and Head of State, has undertaken a variety of measures in the areas of education, health, and social security in order to operationalize the legal and institutional framework for the protection of children's rights. Taking stock of our actions allows us to overcome what comes next.

With regard to education, our attendance rate stands at approximately 98 per cent, with a 96 per cent literacy rate. Respect for gender equality at school is mandatory. The Government of the Gabonese Republic also recently implemented a national mechanism for prevention and rapid intervention in the case of violence against children in schools and in professional training facilities.

With regard to health, we have achieved free pre- and post-natal care for all women, broad coverage for child vaccinations, a birth registration rate of over 90 per cent, the eradication of diseases such as polio and more aggressive action to combat HIV/AIDS, particularly through awareness-raising on sexual health issues and the implementation of universal health insurance.

At the social level, early marriage and forced marriage have been banned. Similarly, a children's code encompassing all types of violence against children has been finalized.

At the institutional level, we welcome the creation of subcommittees for the rights of the child in both chambers of Parliament. Those actions attest to the scope of the Government's commitment to making childhood and youth sacred values within Gabon's aspirations and ambitions. In that connection, we welcome the ongoing support of UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the Joint United Nations

Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and many civil society actors.

Beyond our efforts, we are aware of the new challenges affecting children's rights and well-being, such as climate change, dwindling natural resources and multidimensional poverty, to name but a few. Nevertheless, technological advances inspire hope that we will be able to respond to emerging challenges and prioritize action in the interests of children.

In the light of that hope, each people of the world sees a brighter horizon and takes critical action for our children, who are not only our most valuable asset for a better world but also its beneficiaries and the reason for sustainable development.

**Mr. Boupha** (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is honoured and delighted to participate in this meeting to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

My country's overall development policy, as set out in our Vision 2030, is to eradicate poverty, graduate from least-developed-country status and become an upper-middle-income country. In the social sector, human resource development is the top priority. In the area of child development, my country has adopted policies and measures and enacted laws and regulations to promote and protect the rights of the child.

Most recently, in addition to joining the For Every Child, Every Right global pledge, the Lao Government has made commitments to ensuring children's rights by launching the Lao Generation 2030 Forum. We are pledging to work with our development partners and other relevant stakeholders to develop Lao's human capital by achieving Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals. We will invest in children, adolescents and young people, focus on critical interventions and programmes along the life cycle, strengthen national health, education and child participation, pay special attention to strengthening the child-protection system, adopt a comprehensive approach to changing behaviours and harmful practices, promote gender equality, enhance national statistical systems and establish a robust monitoring system. We call on the international community to provide support and assistance, as resource mobilization is of paramount importance for the effective implementation of those commitments.

**Ms. Sherman** (Liberia): Today I am honoured to bring the General Assembly warm greetings from His Excellency Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, and the Government and the people of Liberia.

Every time we commemorate another milestone of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it presents a unique opportunity for us to heighten the significance of inscribing children's rights on the global agenda. It unveils a compelling moment to collectively, as Member States, reassess the progress we have made over the years on our own commitments and responsibilities to protect and promote children's rights, and to ensure that they are neither jeopardized nor compromised.

In that regard, it is acceptable to acknowledge that we have made some improvements that have benefited millions of children, yet it is disheartening to know that many children are still deprived of the lives they deserve. As a country, we continue to do our part to overcome those challenges.

Liberia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child 26 years ago and has since then made significant strides to further the implementation of the Convention by enacting legislation, policies and programmes to address the rights and welfare of children, including the provision of the rights to survival, access to quality education, justice and health and social protection, as well as other services that impact their growth and development.

In 2010, Liberia signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with specific reference to article 7, which addresses the needs of children. In 2011, we enacted the Education Reform Act and, in collaboration with UNICEF, established a child justice section within the Ministry of Justice to coordinate child justice issues, including policy formulation and the implementation of the juvenile diversion programme. In 2012, Liberia enacted a children's law designed to integrate the Convention on the Rights of the Child as part of our national legal rights. In 2014, Liberia launched a five-year action plan in the fight against trafficking in persons, including children, and established an anti-human-trafficking task force.

In addition, we have rigorously implemented a decent-work bill that prevents children from being subjected to the worst forms of child labour. To protect children under adoption procedures, we revised the domestic relations law, with specific reference to

inter-country adoption. We have set in motion the Liberian National Children's Representative Forum, a platform for children to advocate for and articulate issues that affect them. And our Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection ensures the welfare of our children.

I would like to acknowledge our dear children. The future and the world are theirs to explore. I encourage them to continue to fight and claim what is theirs. May their voices continue to resonate in matters that affect them — health care, climate change, education, food, shelter and a decent life, among others. They have a role in transforming the world to better serve their purpose.

As we celebrate World Children's Day today, Liberia is marking this day with elaborate events under the theme "Make Every Child Future Count by Protecting Their Rights Today". Press conferences and radio talk shows began yesterday and are ongoing. They are being conducted by children. Yesterday was a kids-take-over day, where 200 children from the Liberian National Children's Representative Forum took over positions of key Liberian ministries and private entities. They acted as ministers, managing directors and principals, among other roles. The idea was to give children an opportunity to participate, for a day, in leading roles in order to give them the opportunity to build their self-esteem. They all wore a blue uniform.

Allow me to end this statement by reflecting on the words of a great African son, Nelson Mandela, with the hope that they will inspire our fight in the protection of the rights of children. He said:

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. Let us reach out to the children. Let us do whatever we can to support their fight to rise above their pain and suffering."

**Ms. Lima** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today we celebrate World Children's Day as part of the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We intend to use this opportunity to promote the rights of all the children and adolescents of the world, as recognized in the Convention, which the General Assembly adopted on this day in 1989, and which Spain ratified in December 1990.

Spain's Minister of Health, Consumer Affairs and Social Welfare attended a presentation on Monday

on the conclusions reached in a participatory process through the hard work of almost 5,000 children. Workshops were held where they were given a voice and an opinion on the implementation of the Convention, the achievements made over the past 30 years and the challenges we face. In that connection, we are currently working on the feasibility of setting up a State council for child participation, at the request of the children in the Children and Adolescents' Rights Committee of the Congress of Deputies.

We have also promoted policies in recent months for equal opportunities and against child poverty. For example, in the past year, the Government of Spain created the post of High Commissioner for the Fight against Childhood Poverty, and my Office at the Secretary of State has promoted the VECA programme, thereby helping enforce the right to food, enshrined in article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and provide access to recreational activities, leisure and cultural life, as set forth in article 31 of the Convention. In addition, we have increased the annual amount of the social security allowance for dependent children for many Spanish families.

Moreover, in 2011, the Committee on the Rights of the Child published general comment No. 13, on the right of the child not to be subjected to any form of violence. That recommendation was recently reiterated during the Committee's consideration of Spain's 2018 combined fifth and sixth periodic reports. On that occasion, it was recommended that our country expedite the adoption of legislation guaranteeing comprehensive protection of children against violence and ensure its application at all levels.

It is worth noting that the text of the draft organic law on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against violence is very advanced. In addition, a few days ago a State-wide campaign was launched to raise awareness throughout the population and to combat all types of violence in order to enable children to grow up and live without fear.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and if I did not commend the work carried out during the past 30 years by all actors, from both the public and private spheres, who have had an active presence in all fields of life and development of our youngest citizens at the international, national, regional and municipal levels — with special mention to the social services

of the public administrations, to its professionals, to the non-governmental organizations and to the international organizations dedicated to children. I encourage everyone to continue working on this important common objective.

**Mr. Baati** (Tunisia): Thirty years ago, the international community pledged to protect and promote the rights and fundamental freedoms of all children by adopting the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We applaud the achievements made thus far. It is commendable that nearly all Governments have agreed on the full and effective implementation of the Convention, making it one of the most visionary and universally accepted human rights institutions in history. In that connection, the African Union's Agenda 2063 is committed to a continent whose development is people-driven and relies on the potential of its people, especially its women and youth, to care for its children.

In the 30 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Africa has made tremendous progress in uplifting the lives of its children, including by adopting the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the African Youth Charter and a number of policies and programmes aimed at enhancing the lives of children. In the transition from the era of the Millennium Development Goals to that of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Africa recorded a decrease in the number of critical areas in which we once lagged behind. Child mortality and malnutrition rates have fallen, and children's health has been marked by overall improvement.

In the same vein, access to education across the continent also improved, although we still lag behind in terms of overall statistics with regard to education. With the demand for education predicted to continue to increase owing to our growing young population, access to quality education is also a priority for African Governments. We continue to dedicate resources to those sectors. In order to achieve SDG 4, more will have to be done, including technical assistance from the international community in developing our education sectors.

It is imperative to maintain the political will to sustain the momentum and to continue to concretely invest in children by taking the steps necessary to ensure the social protection of our children, as well as their protection from economic exploitation and

violence, and work together to improve action that will promote the aspirations of African children.

As some might know, African States launched a campaign to end child marriage in 2014. We believe that child marriage perpetuates problems related to poverty, health, the lack of education, gender-based violence, abuse, exploitation, inadequate access to nutrition and the lack of participation and economic opportunities, among others. We recognize the remarkable achievement that, by 2018, globally 25 million child marriages had been prevented as a result of the progress made over the previous decade, driven largely by a sharp decline in child marriage.

In the same vein, African leaders also adopted the African Union initiative on eliminating female genital mutilation. In according importance to that initiative, they presented a draft resolution on female genital mutilation to the United Nations membership.

As we commemorate and recognize the important changes that have taken place with regard to the realization of children's rights and their fundamental freedoms, we are pleased by the progress made. However, much remains to be done to scale up progress in many African countries. African States continue to face the challenges of political instability, economic and financial crises, climate change and adequate funding, which make it difficult to provide the necessary infrastructure and conducive environment to cater to the needs of children, especially children with disabilities.

In situations of armed conflict, African children remain vulnerable as refugees and displaced persons. They witness acts of violence, and they suffer as orphans, losing their lives as well as education opportunities. We call for the international community to continue to coordinate its efforts, including through the allocation of funds, to ensure child protection, child welfare, access to health and education for all children, including those with disabilities — despite the related challenges and their vulnerable situation — and end all forms of violence against children, without exception, while moving towards meeting the African Union goal of silencing the guns by 2020. In that connection, we welcome the partnership agreement signed in 2013 between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the African Union.

In conclusion, we believe in children's liberty and the urgent need to uphold their rights and fundamental freedoms, including by empowering them to claim the latter. African States have committed themselves, individually and collectively, to take the necessary steps to ensure the protection, survival and development of the child, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

It is therefore important to give due consideration to the protection and well-being of children and the implementation of all key Sustainable Development Goals and all other internationally agreed goals to ensure that children, who are our future, are guaranteed the needed peace, security, social investment and appropriate child-protection policies that are crucial to the development of their full capabilities, because today's child is tomorrow's adult.

**Mr. Dang** (Viet Nam): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 10 State members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar and my own country, Viet Nam.

Today's meeting is a special occasion for us to reflect on what we have achieved and what challenges remain in the promotion and protection of children's rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child laid the foundation for Member States to proclaim children's rights, uphold them and be accountable for guaranteeing them. All ASEAN member States are proud to have ratified the Convention.

Since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 30 years ago, the lives of millions of children, especially in developing countries, have been greatly improved. From 1990 to 2018, the under-5 mortality rate decreased by 59 per cent. Over the past 30 years, children's stunting rate has decreased by 41 per cent, while the number of out-of-school children at the primary level has decreased by nearly 40 million. Children are also now enjoying improved conditions in their participation in society and decision-making processes.

Despite tremendous progress, it is undeniable that our children continue to face various challenges. Millions of children remain threatened by poverty, hunger, disease, the lack of education and gender

discrimination. Violence and abuse against children remains a major issue, including in the forms of bullying and cyberbullying. Furthermore, the growing adverse impact of climate change and natural disasters has also exacerbated the vulnerability of children. Against the backdrop of such challenges, ASEAN would like to emphasize the following points.

First, we need to reinforce our joint commitments in creating an enabling environment in which the well-being of the child is ensured.

Secondly, it is essential to further mainstream efforts in promoting the rights of the child in line with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which include 44 child-related indicators.

Thirdly, we need to strengthen national capacities to better ensure the rights of children. A strong legal framework cannot be complete without practical measures, as well as effective law enforcement.

Fourthly, we highlight the need to further strengthen international cooperation, and we call on Member States, the relevant United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders to increase their support, especially for developing countries to ensure the rights of the child.

ASEAN member States have always strived to create an enabling environment for children and youth. In 2019, ASEAN issued four official documents related to children's rights. In order to tackle the issue of violence against children, the region implemented the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children for the period from 2016 to 2025. In addition, through the ASEAN Children' Forum, children are able to learn and voice their opinions on issues such as climate change, education and gender equality.

ASEAN is also strongly committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the realization of the child-related indicators throughout the Sustainable Development Goals. Such commitments have been mainstreamed into the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

To conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm ASEAN's commitment to protecting and promoting children's rights. We also reiterate our commitment to constructively engaging in global efforts to further improve the livelihoods of children. Our

efforts will have greater impact only if we undertake them through dialogue, partnership and cooperation.

**Ms. McGuire (Grenada):** I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

CARICOM joins others in welcoming this high-level meeting of the General Assembly to celebrate the momentous landmark of the adoption of the United Nations Convention, 30 years ago, and in particular on the celebration of World Children's Day. We are pleased to note that the Convention is the most widely ratified human rights treaty.

CARICOM recognizes that nothing is more important to ensuring that no child is left behind than the protection of children's rights and interests. It is that recognition that has prompted CARICOM to emphasize the need to go further and put our children first. The leaders of the Caribbean Community continue to ascribe importance to providing our region's children the enjoyment of their rights by providing them with a safe and healthy environment. Likewise, we insist that children, for the full and harmonious development of their personalities, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

The Convention, coupled with the Declaration on a World Fit for Children and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, has set forth a clear path that can chart the future of our children and provide them with a safer and more enabling environment in which they can grow and develop. In acknowledgement of that, CARICOM member States developed and began to implement the CARICOM Regional Framework for Action for Children.

The Framework seeks to achieve the following: first, give full effect to the right to health and the right to education to all children, with a particular focus on early childhood development; secondly, strengthen efforts to prevent and protect children from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, child labour, including the worst forms, and discrimination in all places, at all times; thirdly, remove barriers that prevent children from accessing the resources necessary for their survival, growth and development; and, fourthly, protect children in the aftermath of natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies, including migrant children



and children with disabilities, as well as incorporate children's needs in climate-change adaptation and mitigation policies.

Owing to that, in April 2018, UNICEF and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, the mandate of which is given by CARICOM, signed a memorandum of understanding to further our cooperation in tackling the challenges facing vulnerable groups and affected populations, especially children, by leveraging the capacity of Governments and regional organizations to promote climate resilience and shock-responsive water, protection, sanitation, education, psychosocial, social protection and hygiene services.

The thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a unique opportunity to put the rights of children high on the agenda and to assess the status of measures taken, with a view to further strengthening and distilling them in the arena of children's rights. We are in a privileged position to take stock of progress made in supporting the rights of children and the fulfilment of obligations enshrined in the Convention until now and look anew at all aspects of child rights.

Finally, as we stand shoulder to shoulder on the cusp of the thirtieth anniversary, let us therefore prepare ourselves to continue to cultivate more values and practices, and let us recommit, clearly and unflinchingly, to the consciousness of protecting the rights of the child. Above all, our children are our future, and the responsibility is ours to ensure that we build a world fit for them.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Gonzato** (European Union): As those present can see, I am in good company today. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States and these three European children. The candidate countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement, together with the Principality of Monaco, the Principality of Andorra and the Republic of San Marino.

This year is a defining year, as we commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified human rights treaty, with 196 State parties. It is a moment to celebrate the achievements of the Convention, which explicitly recognizes every child as a rights holder. Today's children have a better chance to survive, develop their full potential, be protected from violence and exploitation and express their views. What better way to show the benefits of multilateralism than by improving millions of children's lives in the world?

We therefore welcome this high-level meeting, convened by the President of the General Assembly on World Children's Day, which brings together all relevant actors, particularly children, to reflect and renew, at the global and national levels, the commitments to the Convention, notably, that the rights of children are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and that every single child should grow up in a safe and nurturing environment, free from violence and discrimination.

The EU reaffirms that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols constitute the primary international standards in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. To that end, the EU has cooperated with the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries to introduce two draft resolutions on the rights of the child: one during the March session of the Human Rights Council and one in the Third Committee. We welcome the consensus adoption of the Third Committee draft resolution (A/C.3/74/L.21) on Monday. The theme of this year's draft resolution "Children without parental care", could not be more timely, as 2019 marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 64/142, on the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. The draft resolution provides a set of key recommendations to prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their families and urges States to ensure the enjoyment of human rights for all children without parental care through concrete actions, while always stressing the best interests of the child as a primary consideration.

In line with the key principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the EU and its member States are committed to ensuring that all children are reached by their policies and actions and that special attention is given to those who are in disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized situations. Indeed, armed conflicts, poverty, natural and man-made disasters or displacement take their hardest toll on children. We are engaged in the prevention and response to

violence, including sexual violence and abuse, the prevention of the recruitment and use of children and the comprehensive reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups.

The EU Council conclusions in October on combating the sexual abuse of children call for measures to improve the prevention and protection of victims and to investigate those crimes effectively. Nearly €64 million of the EU's humanitarian aid budget in 2019 was allocated to child-protection activities. The renowned EU-United Nations Spotlight Initiative is another example of how we try to eliminate violence against women and girls in South-East Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Yet as we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we also need to reflect on the challenges. Global trends such as digital technologies, climate change, the unhealthy environment, migration, the new nature of armed conflicts and children's aspiration to participate in decision-making processes that affect them are impacting children's enjoyment of their rights. While new technologies provide opportunities to advance children's welfare, they also pose risks. Girls continue to face discrimination. Millions of children go to work every day instead of going to school. Too many children are deprived of parental care. These are real challenges.

We have no time to lose in joining forces to deal with the new frontier challenges over the next 30 years. But, mostly, we need to create more space for the leadership of children and young people to participate and to demonstrate how their involvement on matters that concern them contributes to the realization of their rights.

Investing in children throughout their journey to adulthood is a moral duty and an essential investment in a better future for us all. For the children of today and for the children of tomorrow, our common engagement will endure.

**Ms. Braquetti** (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): In this Hall 30 years ago, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted for the first time in history. My name is Maylene. I just turned 9 years old and I am lucky to be a citizen of Monaco.

Like every 20 November, my country has mobilized itself to celebrate the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For several days now, as we

have done every year for 20 years, thousands of people run in the "No Finish Line" race, thereby allowing children to undergo surgery in Monaco and to be hosted in families. Despite my young age, I know that there are children who are not as free as I am and do not have what I have.

My country has given me my identity. Even today many children are not registered at birth. Without a name or a nationality, they are not recognized, and they cannot see a doctor, go to school or feel safe. In my country, I do not have to be concerned about my health care. I can easily go to a doctor and I know that I will be in good hands. Nor do I have to worry about my education. In Monaco, I am well prepared for the future. For example, from a very young age, we are taught several languages and I can even attend computer coding classes at primary school.

Moreover, I do not have to worry about my safety. Children like me have the freedom to come and go and to benefit from everything that Monaco has to offer while feeling protected. In general, I do not have to worry, and I can focus fully on being a child.

On this thirtieth anniversary, I wish that to be true for all the children in the world because the right of the child is also the right not to have to worry.

**Ms. Rashkovan** (Ukraine): My name is Sonya Rashkovan. We have discussed here many global problems that fall on the shoulders of young people: climate change, poverty, inequality, corruption and opportunity gaps. Technology and the Internet can help to solve some of those problems but, at the same time, they present other risks, particularly in connection with children's digital rights and privacy. UNICEF reports that one in three users of the Internet globally is a child. Many adults think that we spend all our time on social media, but the Internet goes far beyond that. It leads to a lot of things, such as searching, listening to music, messaging, playing online games, posting photographs and reading news. Most classes in the United States do not happen without using Google Classroom, Kahoot!, Quizlet, Khan Academy or Amoeba Sisters videos on YouTube.

As members can see, we leave a digital footprint literally everywhere. That makes children vulnerable to the exploitation of their personal information by both State and commercial agencies, whose data-harvesting practices remain unknown in most parts of the world. We need to change that and to actively fight against it.

Children are less aware than adults of the fact that their online activity is permanently recorded. We are targets not only for big corporations but also for politicians, who can affect our democratic choice.

The major scandal with Cambridge Analytica's data exploitation raised more new questions about data privacy. Imagine in a couple of years when all of us are going to vote. At that point, social media will have data from our entire life. It will give access to undermine democracy all over the world. It starts now when one has no idea where the data is collected and for what purpose.

I strongly believe that children's behaviour should not be monitored without their knowledge and their deliberately informed consent. No personal data should be collected from children without their informed consent. Children's personal data should not be shared with third parties, especially for profit. But none of that is respected in real life so far. Our digital rights are violated. I believe that those rights are as important as all the other rights granted to us. I want to fight against this status quo. I want to protect our digital rights. I want to know where my data goes, have the right to use it and have the right to erase it.

In that regard, it seems that adults do not help much yet. While the large technology conglomerates have access to new data every day and store it for the right moment to use, unfortunately for us, we do not know if their intentions will be good. So we need to hurry up. Let us unite as active young people to try to protect our digital rights. Let us own our data.

**Ms. Akram** (Pakistan): Thirty years ago, the leaders of our countries made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention promised a better tomorrow for us as children. Considerable progress has been made over those 30 years. The number of children without the opportunity of primary education has been reduced by almost 40 per cent. Safe and effective vaccines are more widely available. Sanitation standards have improved. The mortality rate for babies has dropped by 60 per cent across the globe.

However, significant challenges remain. One billion children still live in poverty. They suffer from hunger and malnutrition, which stunt their physical and mental growth and potential. Food is insufficient and is often polluted by chemicals. Education is not yet universal nor are opportunities for education equal. There are

growing dangers of exposure to infectious diseases. The world's climate is changing. We may inherit a less habitable planet.

Technology has improved our lives. There are better nutrition, education and access to knowledge and information. But technology has also created problems. The Internet can be a dangerous place for children. The pace of life could rob us of our youth. Addressing such challenges is essential for the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the protection of the rights of all children.

On the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we should also look ahead to the next 30 years. The international community must pay heed to our young voices about the issues of greatest concern to us and begin working on twenty-first-century solutions to twenty-first-century problems.

I feel extremely proud of the fact that my country, Pakistan, was one of the original signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Pakistan co-facilitated the adoption of the modalities resolution (resolution 73/301) for the commemoration of this thirtieth anniversary of the Convention. I am confident that Pakistan will continue to fully promote and protect the rights of all children at home and abroad.

**Mrs. Hussain** (Maldives): As we celebrate World Children's Day and commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we must be united in our efforts to ensure that due attention is given to the realization of the rights of the child.

With 196 ratifications, the Convention is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. This is a testament to the world's commitment to fostering societies in which children are able to reach their full potential. The Maldives is proud to have ratified the Convention and its three Optional Protocols, emphasizing our commitment to leave no child behind. During the recently concluded high-level segment of the General Assembly, the Maldives ratified the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

The protection of the rights of the child is a high priority for the Government of Maldives. Today I am proud to announce that President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has ratified the Child Rights Protection Act and the Juvenile Justice Act into law. The Child Rights

Protection Act would, among other things, protect children from discrimination, harm, neglect, physical and emotional abuse, and guarantee their right to education, safety and security. The Child and Family Protection Services would be established as an advisory body to the Cabinet to assist in the creation of laws and policies related to child rights. A children's ombudsman will also be appointed to the Human Rights Commission under this law, tasked with impartially protecting child rights and freedoms.

The Juvenile Justice Act would raise the age of criminal responsibility to 15 years and commit to establishing a juvenile rehabilitation centre in an effort to develop a comprehensive juvenile justice system. This would emphasize community-based solutions for the well-being of the child while recognizing the differing circumstances and needs of girls and boys.

An inclusive education is critical to ensuring that no child is left behind. In that regard, the Government of Maldives places high priority on ensuring quality and inclusive education. Although the Maldives has near-universal net enrolment rates for primary education, strengthening educational programmes for children with special needs through early identification, diagnosis and targeted interventions has been prioritized.

However, challenges remain such as achieving economies of scale in the provision of education in geographically dispersed islands, lack of human resources and budgetary constraints. To address such challenges, we have prioritized the strengthening of institutional structures and the building of human-resource capacity, not just in the capital but throughout the country.

In addition, it is important to note that this century's defining issue, climate change, has important implications for the rights of children. They will inherit our future. If we do not address climate change today, their future will be lost and their rights compromised.

Children are the voices of tomorrow and the agents of change. The principles and provisions and spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child remain relevant and critical to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Maldives will remain steadfast in its commitment to achieving every right for every child and ensuring children's full and meaningful participation in society.

**Mrs. Rugwabiza (Rwanda):** Rwanda aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Group of African States.

Not long after the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted, in 1989, the world witnessed one of the worst episodes in human history—the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, my country. Children and young people under 24 were some of the main targets of the genocide, representing 54 per cent of the victims. Children who survived the genocide, overwhelmed by health issues and psychological trauma, found it very difficult to overcome their experiences.

Today the Government that stopped the genocide has managed to turn the situation around completely for children in Rwanda by implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child through a set of child-focused policies and institutions, including the National Commission for Children, the Child Rights Observatory, the Integrated Child Rights Policy and many others that I will not list here.

The Government of Rwanda has ensured that Rwandan children are at the centre of all our country's development efforts and policies.

Let me list a few examples of how Rwandan children are empowered today.

First, Rwanda has ensured that birth registration is guaranteed for all citizens, including ensuring that a birth certificate can be obtained through an online platform, and recently by introducing a new registration that will be rolled out in all public-health facilities. That was focused on because identity and identification remain a challenge.

Secondly, through the national strategy for child care, the Government of Rwanda has ensured that orphans are placed in safe, loving and supportive family environments. In our tradition, we did not have children living away from their families. The genocide left us with a legacy of tens of thousands of orphans, so that policy was aimed at putting children back where they belong and where they should grow up, in families.

To implement this, the Government of Rwanda is working closely with UNICEF. To date, 95 per cent of children without biological families have been placed in alternative family arrangements. We are currently working towards ensuring the reintegration of children living with disabilities.

Ninety-nine per cent of children under the age of five are immunized, and 84 per cent of households are covered by our national health insurance scheme. We have achieved universal health coverage in Rwanda. The Government of Rwanda is also investing in increasing the number of health centres and community health workers across the country. To date, there are more than 60,000. Today Rwanda has one of the highest primary school enrolment rates. As a result, we have achieved the targets of the Sustainable Development goals related to access to primary education. In Rwanda, children are active participants in policy formulation. Our annual children's summit provides an opportunity for children to engage and discuss issues affecting their lives — instead of only being the subject of discussions — and ensures that their opinions and concerns are considered in national policies and programmes. As we meet today to celebrate this thirtieth anniversary, this year's annual children's summit is taking place today in Kigali.

While major progress has been achieved with regard to child protection in Rwanda and beyond, there are some areas that need improvement. First, we must improve access to quality health care and education for all, especially the most disadvantaged. Secondly, we must harmonize legal protections in labour laws to ensure that we protect children from child labour. Thirdly, we must improve the protection of children from violence, neglect, exploitation and abuse, including ensuring that children who face abuse have access to justice and mental health and medical services. At a global level, we must all do more to address the high number of cases of children that are caught up and used in situations of armed conflict.

In conclusion, let me thank the United Nations entities for their critical work to protect children's rights worldwide and the numerous civil-society and non-governmental organizations — all the stakeholders — that do the much-needed work on the ground alongside the Government to supplement all our initiatives. Rwanda remains committed to ensuring that our children are fully empowered to become responsible citizens, with the strong and well-grounded values and capabilities necessary to work together from a very early age to find solutions to the global issues that are already impacting them.

**Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar)** (*spoke in Arabic*): It is our pleasure to participate in the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the

Rights of the Child, which the State Qatar was among the first States to ratify. Qatar has made the protection of the rights of the child, especially the right to education, a top priority. In cooperation with our international partners, we have provided access to quality education for 10 million children in the world through initiatives of the Education Above All Foundation in the State of Qatar. We have also provided \$50 million to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East education services for Palestinian refugees in Jordan, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Syria and Lebanon.

In addition, the Emir of the State of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, announced in 2018 Qatar's pledge to provide quality education to 1 million girls around the world by 2021. As part of our efforts to strengthen peacebuilding and rehabilitate child soldiers, Qatar has committed to providing \$88 million to the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund, in addition to implementing a social and economic rehabilitation programme for former combatants, including child soldiers. We also supported the rebuilding of five service centres in five villages in Darfur, including water stations, primary and secondary schools and a police station, which contribute to creating an enabling environment for the children.

With regard to strengthening children's right to health care, we have provided \$70 million to support a programme to rehabilitate water and sanitation networks in Yemen in order to combat cholera and improve access to potable water. The project benefits 8.5 million Yemenis, including 4.25 million children. In addition, in partnership with UNICEF, we have supported a project to improve and upgrade water and sanitation services in schools and primary health-care centres in Iraq. We are proud of our close partnership with UNICEF in implementing several projects and programmes that have contributed to saving children's lives and defending their rights, including helping them realize their potential. Our partnership recently culminated in the provision of \$8 million in financial support to UNICEF for key resources for the period 2019 to 2020, including the opening of a UNICEF office in Doha shortly.

Preparations are also under way to open the Doha Analysis and Outreach Centre, as part of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Centre will significantly contribute to spreading knowledge and

skills related to the protection of children affected by armed conflicts in the region. In that context, we would like to welcome the publication of the findings of the global study on children deprived of liberty, launched in Geneva on 18 November, to which Qatar contributed approximately \$100,000 in support.

In conclusion, I reiterate Qatar's commitment to implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols in order to realize children rights in all areas and under any conditions.

**Mr. Koba** (Indonesia): I would like to thank the President for convening this momentous meeting.

Children are the future of our world, they are our hope and they are our leaders of tomorrow. Together we have achieved much progress in the three decades that have followed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Indonesia itself has achieved significant progress and concrete steps in that regard. First, we established a national children's forum in more than 350 cities across the country. Secondly, we are a pathfinding country in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and have launched a national strategy for the elimination of violence against children for the period 2016 to 2020. Those actions provide cross-sectoral guidance on child protection. Thirdly, we have established child-friendly schools and provide child-friendly access to information and technology. Fourthly, we are striving to end child marriage by setting the age of 19 years as the minimum age for marriage in our newly amended marriage law. Lastly, we are among the first of the countries to have endorsed the UNICEF For Every Child, Every Right global pledge, and we are very proud of that. We are also committed to fulfilling our promises for our children, including those in rural and remote areas.

However, there is still much to be done. Our to-do list contains many critical issues that remain to be addressed, including bullying, child trafficking and the six grave violations against children in armed conflict. Indonesia believes that the promotion of the rights of the child must start from the basic unit of society, that is, the family. Moving forward, we will continue to develop family-friendly policies by increasing access to health care for mothers and children, quality education for children and economic empowerment for the family.

Finally, in the spirit of inclusivity and multilateralism, we support all efforts in that regard by the relevant Special Representatives of the Secretary-

General and United Nations agencies. We invite all Member States to take active steps in synergy towards the full implementation of the Convention by adopting regulations and policies within our respective national contexts. Happy World Children's Day.

**Mr. Sparber** (Liechtenstein): The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a milestone agreement in every sense and one of the more visionary moments in the history of treaty-making. The Convention enshrines nothing less than a paradigm shift in how we see children and their role in society. It is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. It has helped to transform children's lives around the globe by empowering and protecting them. As a consequence, children are more and more frequently finding their own voices and becoming agents of change. At the same time, however, the Convention is still not universal, and it lacks implementation in too many areas. Millions of children continue to suffer violations of their rights every day. Girls are often more severely affected than boys. One in five children are out of school. Nearly one in five children live in conflict. And we remember with shivers the thousands of school bags in our United Nations garden, symbolizing the children lost to the senseless violence of war in just one year. There are nearly 50 million child refugees across the globe. And we might never have been further from the spirit of the Convention than in discussions on whether children are legally entitled to toothbrushes and on whether they can be separated from their parents without due process.

Depriving children of their rights often goes hand in hand with silencing them. That vicious circle can be broken by giving children a voice and a right to complain that cannot be taken away from them. The third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a mechanism that empowers children to be agents of change themselves. Liechtenstein has been among the few States to ratify that Protocol. Based on our own experience, we encourage all States to follow suit and see for themselves how empowering a step that can be, both for children and the societies in which they live.

The Convention has all the essentials to guide us into the future. Without children's rights there cannot be economic, social and environmental sustainability. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development fully recognizes that perspective. Many of the most urgent measures for sustainable development must benefit children first, if we want to have a swift and lasting

impact. Climate change is a prime example of why children should be in the driver's seat. Today's children will reach adulthood at a time when we are supposed to have achieved the Sustainable Development Goals. We are accountable to them, and they will hold us accountable for our failures to live up to our promises. Thinking in terms of intergenerational justice necessarily leads to child-centred policies that are sensitive to the needs and interests of children and youth and include them in our decision-making. Only then can we ensure we are acting in the best interests of the child — the very core of the Convention we are celebrating today.

**Ms. Wronecka** (Poland): It is an honour for me to represent Poland at this high-level meeting to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This event demonstrates the importance that the international community attaches to the rights of the child, and I am proud to have the privilege to represent my country, which came up with the very idea of the Convention. It was in 1979, during the International Year of the Child, that my country proposed the draft text and triggered the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Convention 10 years later. Today the Convention has the highest number of ratifications of any treaty around the world.

November 1989 was historic in many ways. It was the first time that children were explicitly recognized as rights-holders under an international treaty. That marked the transition from addressing children's immediate needs through charity alone to galvanizing a move towards advocacy with a view to bringing about a systemic change for the realization of children's rights. For the first time ever, Governments explicitly recognized that children have the same human rights as adults, as well as specific additional rights that became known as a special status as dependents.

The protection and promotion of children's rights in the international arena has been further strengthened through various instruments over the past 30 years. In May 2000, the General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which aims to protect children from being recruited and used in hostilities. More recently, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals brought about an unprecedented opportunity to build on the progress made by the Convention and address new challenges. There can

be no doubt that the adoption of the Convention has transformed the lives of children. Since 1990, we have seen a 50 per cent reduction in the deaths of children under 5. Today, when compared to 1990, an additional 2.6 billion children have access to clean drinking water. The proportion of undernourished children has almost been halved. What might be even more important is that we have started to view children as empowered agents of change from whom we can all learn. We see powerful and determined girls and boys fighting for the right to education for all and a clean environment. Children often have the courage to say out loud things that we do not dare say.

The thirtieth anniversary of the Convention is an opportunity to celebrate the progress achieved but also look at what still needs to be done. Today we must also face the uncomfortable truth that the rights of millions of children around the world are being violated every day. Children are often the most affected by poverty, homelessness, neglect and unequal access to education, especially those in vulnerable situations, such as children with disabilities, who too often find themselves left behind. We still have a lot to do in order to prevent and eradicate the violations and abuses faced by children in conflict situations. The protection of children is Poland's priority in its current membership of the Security Council. It will also be at the top of our agenda during Poland's membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2020 to 2022. Today as much as 30 years ago, children remain at the heart of Poland's policies. Inspired by the Convention, Poland promotes children's rights in international forums as well as through its own internal policies.

In conclusion, we all know that promoting children's rights means protecting our common future. Investing in children is one of the most valuable long-term investments that societies can make.

**Mr. Lauber** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland welcomes the holding of this high-level plenary meeting on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the conference held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. No other convention enjoys such universal recognition and validity, which reflects the political will and commitment of States from all regions of the world to respecting, promoting and protecting the rights of the child.

Nonetheless, challenges remain. An alarming number of children continue to live in poverty or in areas affected by armed conflict or natural disasters. Many children do not have access to school, experience a range of violence, discrimination, abuse and neglect or are deprived of their liberty.

As States, we have a responsibility to take concrete measures to protect children from all forms of violence and provide them with a safe place to grow up. Switzerland takes that responsibility most seriously. In order to strengthen the implementation of the recommendations the Committee on the Rights of the Child made to Switzerland, the Government has adopted a package of measures, in particular to protect children against violence and ensure respect for the rights of children in care or whose parents are deprived of their liberty.

At the international level, among other things, Switzerland supports the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, works to ensure access to quality education for children in areas affected by armed conflict and promotes the social reintegration of former child soldiers.

However, Switzerland stresses that children are not just vulnerable people who need our protection. As the recent climate strikes have illustrated, children are actors and agents of change. We therefore have an obligation to heed their demands and their innovative ideas. And it is therefore of the utmost importance that children be provided a platform for participation and self-expression. That is why it is such pleasure to see so many children participating in this event today. We congratulate them on their determination and encourage them to continue speaking up and defending their rights.

Switzerland takes the opportunity of this anniversary to express its hope for greater commitment to, and cooperation on, fully implementing the Convention so as to make the rights of the child a reality throughout the world. We underscore the importance of collaboration with civil society and all United Nations mechanisms for the respect, promotion and protection of the rights of the child. In that regard, Switzerland supports the UNICEF For Every Child, Every Right global initiative, and encourages all States to join in this effort.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): Before giving the floor to the Permanent Representative of

Bangladesh, I wish to draw the attention of the Assembly to the fact that this might be the last statement he makes before the Assembly before returning to his country.

**Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh): We thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this high-level meeting on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The delegation of Bangladesh also attended the high-level commemorative event that took place on 25 September on the sidelines of the high-level week.

Bangladesh's commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of children remains unflinching. That the birthday of the father of our nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on 17 March, is observed in our country as National Children's Day is a unique manifestation of the importance he attached, as we all do, to rights of children.

Bangladesh was among the first countries to ratify various important United Nations and international instruments pertaining to child rights. Our national plans and actions for children are also guided by the Convention to fulfil our international obligations. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Government is implementing a comprehensive programme that is already paying dividends in reducing maternal and infant mortality, augmenting child nutrition, improving health and education, eliminating child abuse, preventing child trafficking and withdrawing and rehabilitating children from hazardous work. Ensuring their overall well-being and development through social-safety provisions is an integral part of our whole-of-society approach in implementing Vision 2021. As a young nation, we shall be celebrating the golden jubilee of our independence in 2021. We also expect to graduate from least developed to developing country by 2021. With this forward march, we hope to provide a better future for our children.

In recognition of our Government's continued efforts to develop the skills of our young people, including in information and communication technologies, and prepare them for the fourth industrial revolution, our Prime Minister was recently awarded the title Champion of Skill Development for Youth by UNICEF. Our child health programmes promote the rights of children starting from birth. We have achieved tremendous success in child immunization. In recognition of that, our Prime Minister this year received the Vaccine Hero



Award from the Global Alliance for Vaccination and the World Health Organization.

Approximately 17 million children around the world have been displaced by conflict and violence, as well as by natural disasters and other emergencies. When such displacement occurs, family and community structures tend to break down, as do traditional institutions, making displaced children more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and neglect. That is what we witnessed at close quarters while dealing with the Rohingya crisis. Bangladesh hosts 1.1 million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals, of whom 60 per cent are women and children. Our Government is working with Myanmar and the international community in addressing their humanitarian needs. However, if the problem is prolonged, there are looming risks of crimes such as trafficking, forced marriage, drug peddling, illegal organ trade and forced slavery and prostitution involving children. We draw the attention of the General Assembly to those issues.

On this day of celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, we must utilize this occasion not only to exemplify but also put into action our collective commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of the child all over the world. As we enter into the last decade of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, we should redouble our efforts so that we can move towards reaching those Goals and targets, upholding the rights of the child.

**Mr. Amos** (Canada) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for Canada to mark today the thirtieth anniversary of the landmark adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We join the international community in reaffirming our determination to give our children the best possible start in life.

Many speakers today have highlighted the many achievements made over the past three decades, but also the challenges still to be overcome. And no country has a perfect record. Many children in Canada continue to face significant challenges, especially those in indigenous and northern communities. Indigenous children make up less than 8 per cent of all Canadian children but account for more than half of all children in foster care. That is one of the most urgent priorities for Canada, and we are committed to finding child-centered, indigenous-led and prevention-focused solutions to make meaningful change for current and future generations of indigenous children.

However, girls the world over continue to face systemic barriers, which perpetuate poverty and inequality, limit their potential and prevent them from fully realizing their fundamental rights. Many representatives today have mentioned the importance of education. Canada shares that point of view. That is why we have made education a priority, including at the Charlevoix Group of Seven Summit last year, where investments totalling more than \$3.8 million to support education for women and girls were announced.

(*spoke in English*)

That is also why Canada was one of the main advocates of the establishment of the International Day of the Girl and why Canada has been strongly supportive of the United Nations Population Fund-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage. We will continue to work with all stakeholders on this important issue, including through partnerships, development assistance and multilateral initiatives such as the General Assembly resolution on child, early and forced marriage, which we co-led with Zambia.

To be effective, our efforts need to reach the most marginalized and disadvantaged. None of us choose where we are born, least of all children affected by armed conflict. Those kids need protection, and they need it now. Indeed, more than 12,000 were killed or maimed last year — the most ever. Launched in 2017, the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers seek to improve the international community's efforts in that regard. We are proud that, in only two years, 95 countries have endorsed the Vancouver Principles.

We need to translate our commitments into action. And we need to do it together, united as nations and as partners. That is the kind of Security Council member Canada would be: inclusive, innovative, open, honest and reliable — working together with all Member States, for all Member States, and for all children around the world. In fact, all of our priorities for the Security Council, including addressing climate change, sustaining peace and promoting gender equality, contribute to advancing the rights of children.

In conclusion, we would like to commend all who have today made pledges to renew their commitment to children's rights. We all benefit when every child has an equal and fair chance at success.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to remind the Assembly that we have a very long list of speakers remaining. I therefore sincerely request that speakers respect the three-minute time limit per statement.

**Mr. Mimouni** (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Marking the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is undoubtedly a special occasion on which the present and the future are focused on children. Today's commemoration, marked moreover by the participation of children and young adolescents, whom I welcome, is a good opportunity to recall the commitments made three decades ago to ensure, in a mandatory and non-negotiable way, that all children fully enjoy their fundamental rights.

In addition to taking stock of our commitments, this anniversary provides an opportunity to underline the crucial need to continue in our efforts to promote and protect the rights of all children to live, grow, learn, flourish and to be heard — in other words, to ensure strict respect for the principle of the best interests of children.

Since reclaiming our national sovereignty, Algeria has put children at the heart of its national policies and programmes, seeking to guarantee and promote their rights through legislation and regulations. The strong results achieved on those fronts reflect the sustained efforts dedicated by my country and illustrated in its voluntary national report submitted in July to the High-level Political Forum of the Economic and Social Council on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that context, the principle of compulsory free education without any discrimination between girls and boys resulted in a school enrolment rate of 98.5 per cent in 2018.

Similar gains have made in health outcomes. Specifically, thanks to free access to health care and vaccination, Algeria's expanded programme on immunization, rated by UNICEF as one of the most effective health programmes, helped reduce the infant mortality rate from 4 per cent in 2000 to 2.3 per cent in 2018.

Moreover, in July 2015, the Algerian Government adopted a law enshrining guarantees for the protection of children against all forms of prejudice, negligence, violence, mistreatment and exploitation and aiming to protect those rights in emergencies, disasters, wars and

armed conflicts, as well as against the media, so as to prevent any harm to their physical or mental well-being.

That is to say that all my country's efforts in this area fully reflect its determination to upholding its international commitments pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

We mark the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the world is undergoing rapid change and the rights enshrined in the Convention are facing new challenges due to the emergence of new information and communication technologies, climate change, development disparities and migratory flows. Those developments call on us to work more closely together to take collective action against these concurrent challenges, which heighten the threats faced by vulnerable children. It is only through a comprehensive and inclusive approach that respects the specific cultural characteristics of each nation that we will be able to build a better world for our children and citizens of the future.

In conclusion, I wish to specify that my delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Group of African States.

**Mrs. Raz** (Afghanistan): Let me begin by thanking the General Assembly for holding this very important high-level meeting on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Child, which coincides with World Children's Day. As has been said, it is truly timely to demand action and ensure that every child enjoys every right.

Unfortunately, despite the long history of this very important Convention, children across the world still suffer the pain of losing their parents or their lives to conflict. They still long for peaceful and equitable childhoods, for safety and for better opportunities. Many must still tread the long and dangerous path to refuge. They still demand equal protection and equal rights.

The dynamics and the severity of the challenges facing millions of children globally have changed profoundly since the adoption of the Convention. Our societies are affected by armed conflicts, internal displacement, climate change, transnational terrorism and criminality.

As elsewhere, children in Afghanistan are among the most vulnerable social groups. Protecting them is a national security priority and a human rights commitment that we have to our children. In the past decade, as a party to the Convention, the Government of Afghanistan allocated its institutional and legal resources to draft, approve and endorse a series of legislation and national action plans to safeguard children and protect their rights.

As a responsible Government and State, we are obligated to create an environment conducive to the social, physical and mental well-being of our children. On education, we have developed the national education strategic plan to expand access to equitable education and increase primary and secondary school enrolment. We have also adopted the Safe Schools Declaration to shield children from the effects of conflict. More than 9 million children, including 3.5 million girls, are going to school today, some with the utmost bravery in the face of threats from the Taliban and other militant groups that oppose women and girls' education.

We have made considerable progress on the push to end child labour. Our national child labour strategy provides the legal basis to end child exploitation in the labour force. We have launched nationwide training programmes and public-awareness campaigns and taken preventive measures to practically eradicate child labour by 2030.

Part of the vulnerability of Afghan children in conflict zones is due to their indiscriminate use as human shields by the Taliban. The conduct of war in residential areas endangers the lives of children. Our security forces are repeatedly instructed and educated to preserve the core principles of the conduct of war, in accordance with international humanitarian law, as well as the modern ethics and moral imperatives of war, in order to prevent civilian casualties, including among children, in their operations. However, terrorist groups, especially the Taliban, have no such boundaries, or any international or national commitments to follow.

From this international platform, it is important to call upon the Taliban to stop using children in civilian compounds as shields and to stop killing innocent children. For instance, last week a suicide blast took the lives of 12 people, including three children, in Kabul. Among them were two children from a single family, a brother and sister. The night before the attack, the

family had celebrated the seventh birthday of one of their children, who was killed in the attack.

That is the story of children in Afghanistan, and also the story of many other children across the world who lose their lives as a result of protracted conflicts and terrorist attacks. Our shared commitment and joint pledge as Member States is needed now more than at any other time in our history in order to help to ensure the full implementation of our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Afghanistan renews its pledge to the Convention and, as an engaged Member of the United Nations, we will do our utmost to advocate for and take the necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of every child in Afghanistan and provide them with the necessary means and resources for the protection of their rights.

**Mr. Hawke** (New Zealand): The Convention on the Rights of the Child has had a profound influence over the past 30 years on the way we work with children and, in turn, develop our policies and practices, from our work here at the United Nations, to classrooms and in communities across the globe. New Zealand joins in celebrating the successes of the past 30 years. We are proud of our achievements and have renewed our commitment to the Convention through a voluntary pledge to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

But this anniversary is also an important reminder of what we need to continue to focus on. In global terms, most young New Zealanders are doing well. However, we recognize that too many children, young people and their families are facing adversity, deprivation and stress that reduce their well-being and life opportunities.

In August, New Zealand launched its first child and youth well-being strategy to tackle those challenges. For the strategy to be successful, we knew it had to reflect what children want. Children, young people and their families were invited to share their ideas, experiences and perspectives about what would help make New Zealand the best place in the world for children and young people. We heard from more than 6,000 children and young people and targeted those whose voices are often less heard. Those included children and young people living in poverty, in State care or with a disability, as well as those who identify as LGBTIQI+, are recent migrants or have received a mental health diagnosis.

Children and young people told us about happiness, family and friends. They shared that they wanted to be accepted for who they are and who they want to be. They also conveyed that life is really hard for some of them and that mental health is a huge problem, as well as that having money for basic things such as food, clothes and a good house to live in is a struggle for too many families. Their voices helped shape the New Zealand strategy. They will also remain with us as we take action to implement its goals and as we continue our work to realize the rights in the Convention for all children and young people.

As the Convention turns 30, it is clear that our work is not done in this regard. We can and must do more for the generations that follow us. Happy World's Children day to all.

**Mrs. Bogyay** (Hungary): It is really a joy and privilege for me to represent my country at the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child with all those present and with all these wonderful young ladies and men. Listening to the children who spoke today gave us a real understanding of why we are working here.

This anniversary is a special one for us, as this year we also celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the democratic transition in Hungary. On this occasion, Hungary reaffirms its strong commitment to the full implementation of the Convention. We are proud to be among the first ones who joined the UNICEF global pledge, thereby reaffirming our relentless efforts to make the Convention a reality for every child.

Hungary's child protection and child welfare system has undergone substantial transformation over the past 30 years. We ratified the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child — on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography — as well as the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, known as the Lanzarote Convention. We strengthened our mechanism to prevent and end violence against, and the maltreatment, abuse and neglect of, children. This year the Government introduced the Barnahus model for child-friendly and specialized investigation, of and therapy for, neglected and abused children.

On this year's tenth anniversary of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, we reaffirm our commitment to upholding the rights of children who lack parental care by facilitating adoption, completing the institutionalization of those rights and ensuring quality family-based care. We have encouraging results to share. For example, the child-adoption rate has been increasing since 2010. Currently, 70 per cent of children under protection live in a family-based environment. I would like to say that the Government has implemented a comprehensive social policy to ensure inclusion and equal opportunities.

Within that framework, last year the Government introduced social assistance in kindergartens and schools and made free school meals available for children in need throughout the country, including during school holidays, because we uphold the rights of children and their best interests. We are committed to that, and that is why we believe that children are the common treasure of our society.

**Mr. Fifield** (Australia): Australia is deeply committed to making sure that children realize their full rights, at home and abroad. That is one of the sacred trusts of Member States. Today's is a great and welcome initiative — a forum to hear the views of children.

The good news is that most Australian children enjoy high levels of participation in education, access to high-quality health care and have safe homes and communities. We are committed to empowering our children through our strong public institutions and ensuring access and equity for all without discrimination.

It is nevertheless important, especially in our online and connected world, to protect and maintain a safe space to allow kids to be kids. That is why the Australian Government established the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner and backed it with a legislated world-first children cyberbullying take-down regime to give the eSafety Commissioner the powers to direct platforms to take down offending finding cyberbullying material with severe penalties for the failure to do so. As the challenges for children change, so must the tools to protect them and ensure the enjoyment of their rights, none of which is greater than the right of a child to live as a child.

Australia, however, acknowledges that some children still face barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights. We are working to support children facing particular challenges — Aboriginal and Torres Strait

islander children, children with disabilities, children living in remote areas, LGBTI children and those living with family instability and stress.

Hearing children's voices is essential to inform the work of our Governments. State and territory Governments, for instance, have a range of initiatives to support children in having a say on the issues that matter to them and to participate in Government decision-making. The new Commonwealth Minister for Youth is supported by a task force, which is actively considering a range of mechanisms for improving the participation and engagement of children and young people in Government decision-making.

In addition, Australia's first independent National Children's Commissioner has held consultations with more than 28,000 children since her appointment in 2015 to hear directly from them about the issues that affect their lives now and into the future. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner has also been conducting a series of community visits and conversations with indigenous women and girls around the nation. Every year, Australia appoints a youth representative to the United Nations, and Australia's twenty-first youth representative addressed the General Assembly at its present session at the beginning of October and shared his thoughts and the discussions that he had had with young Australians from around the country about their hopes and dreams for the future.

Australia is committed to address the challenges that prevent some young people in our community from fully realizing their rights. We are committed to realizing their hopes and supporting children achieve their full potential and be the great citizens and contributors that we all want them to be.

**Mrs. Senewiratne** (Sri Lanka): As we commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, my delegation takes this opportunity to reaffirm Sri Lanka's long-standing and firm commitment to the promotion and protection of child rights. Children are our present and future, and constructive investment in them yields positive benefits for both the economy and society.

While we recognize that tangible progress has been made in many aspects of the well-being of children worldwide, there nevertheless remains much unfinished work. It is of concern that, in many areas of child rights, the scale of the relevant challenges remains formidable, with many children being left behind. The

prolonged effects of poverty and inequality and the adverse impacts of climate change, protracted conflict and humanitarian crises, to mention but a few, all have a negative toll on the tender lives of children in many parts of the world.

With the commemoration of this important milestone and with the Convention on the Rights of Child as one of the most widely ratified human rights treaties, we must redouble our efforts in achieving its objectives. In that context, an honest evaluation of accomplishments and challenges is needed if we are truly to leave no child behind, by providing them with their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which they are entitled to in their own right. There is also a need to recognize and seize the opportunities provided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to proactively invest in children and the young, thereby protecting them from discrimination, inequalities and abuse.

At the national level, Sri Lanka has adopted a holistic approach in the implementation of the Convention, as it complements and reinforces efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Sri Lanka condemns all forms of violence against children and maintains a zero-tolerance policy in that regard. Furthermore, we were one of the first States to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In a demonstration of its commitment to eradicating the challenges associated with the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Sri Lanka signed and ratified the eponymous Optional Protocol in 2006.

Measures have been put in place to give effect to the Convention and its two Optional Protocols through appropriate legal reforms, which also include the formulation and implementation of policies and action plans that enjoy the patronage and commitment at the highest level of Government and involve the active participation of civil-society and community-based organizations.

My delegation takes this opportunity to express its appreciation for the work carried out by UNICEF in making the world a better place for children. In particular, Sri Lanka wishes to single out the UNICEF Office in Sri Lanka, which has consistently worked in consultation with national institutions for the betterment of the lives of children in the country.

**Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): The world's leaders united around a common cause 30 years ago and made a historic promise to children: to do everything in their power to build a world fit for children and to affirm, protect and promote their rights. As the first legally binding instrument devoted exclusively to the rights of the child, the Convention has helped to improve the situation of children around the world and transform the lives of millions of children in many ways.

I am pleased to note that, throughout the past three decades, Morocco has contributed to, and supported the elaboration of, every international instrument related to the rights of the child and adhered to the overwhelming majority of them. Morocco's resolute commitment to the international impetus in favour of children is a strategic and irreversible choice, based on the long-term vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, who has made the protection and promotion of the rights of the child a national, regional and international priority. Moreover, owing to the personal commitment of Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem, Chairperson of the National Observatory for Children's Rights, the Kingdom of Morocco has made remarkable achievements in guaranteeing children their full rights and ensuring their well-being.

As we meet at Headquarters today, the sixteenth National Congress on Child Right is taking place in parallel in Marrakech, from 20 to 23 November, under the patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and the effective presidency of Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem. The Congress is an opportunity to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention and the twentieth anniversary of the Moroccan Children's Congress.

Morocco is also working for the full enjoyment of the rights of the child throughout our continent, Africa. In that regard, I would like to highlight the continental campaign launched by Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem in November 2018, entitled "African cities without children in street situations".

In addition, Morocco's chairmanship of UNICEF's Executive Board in 2019 and its vice-chairmanship in 2020 constitute a consecration of the valuable actions and initiatives undertaken by the Kingdom to preserve and promote the best interests of children. I would like to pay tribute to UNICEF and its Executive Director, Ms. Henrietta Fore, for their tireless efforts to ensure

that all children across all parts of the world can enjoy all of their rights.

The past 30 years have honoured many of the Convention's promises and seen significant progress being made around the world. However, much remains to be done. Multiple challenges persist, and others are emerging, that are having a very negative impact on the full enjoyment of children's rights, including climate change, violent extremism, terrorism and conflict. Today, as we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention, we must all reaffirm our commitments and strengthen our actions in order to fully and effectively fulfil the vision of this historic document, which has lost none of its urgency or relevance, and to address new challenges. In that common quest, it is fundamental that children be our full-fledged partners. Our joint efforts should also be based on a set of internationally agreed goals. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes many of the promises made to children in 1989, including a crucial additional provision — the promise to leave no one behind, especially children. It is our responsibility to fulfil that promise. Let us all work together to make it happen.

Finally, I would like to wish all the children of the world a happy World Children's Day.

**Ms. Khyne** (Myanmar): We are proud to join today's commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is regarded as the most important global instrument for children and one of the most widely ratified human rights treaties in history. While the lives of millions of children have been improved since the adoption of the Convention, 30 years ago, the situation of children is still critical in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries. Many challenges remain in ensuring the full realization of their rights.

As one of the first Member States to ratify the Convention in our region, Myanmar wishes to take this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the full realization of the Convention in order to ensure children's rights. The Government is fully committed to supporting every child in reaching their full potential, in fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring that no child is left behind. We also reiterate our support for the collective efforts aimed at furthering the rights of children globally.

Myanmar has achieved considerable progress on child rights since becoming a State party to the United

Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1991. The Government has devoted attention to critical areas of health, education, protection and legislation, among others, in order to promote the rights of children. The national budget allocation to social sectors increased from 12.2 per cent in the period 2016 to 2017 to 13.8 per cent in 2018 to 2019. As a responsible State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Myanmar enacted its national child rights law in 1993. The law was revised and adopted by the Union Parliament in July with a view to aligning national policies and regulatory frameworks with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Moreover, the inter-ministerial committee for the prevention of the six grave violations against children during armed conflict was established on 7 January to prevent and address violations against children in armed conflict. Most recently, during the high-level week of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, Myanmar ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, so as to reinforce our ongoing efforts to protect and promote child rights and in fulfilment of our international commitments.

Peace and economic development constitute an essential enabling environment for the full realization of the rights of children. The Government of Myanmar has been striving relentlessly to end the decade-long internal armed conflict that is having a hugely negative impact on innocent children. Conflicts deprive them of their right to education and well-being, and most of all their hopes and aspirations for the future. The ongoing peace process of the 21st Century Panglong Union Peace Conferences includes the protection of the rights of children as one of its basic principles in building sustainable peace.

Despite being a nascent democratic State with myriad security and developmental challenges, we will continue to give top priority to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the rights of children. We will continue to strive for the full realization of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I wish to conclude by expressing our deep appreciation to UNICEF for its almost seven decades of invaluable contributions to uplifting the lives of millions of mothers and children in Myanmar. We look forward to continuing our close cooperation with

UNICEF in our national efforts to fully implement the 2030 Agenda so that no child is left behind.

**Mrs. Lopes De Jesus Pires** (Timor-Leste): Today's commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child generates special momentum for the international community to step up its efforts and for us to renew our commitment to protecting and promoting the human rights of children. While notable progress has been achieved in the past three decades, significant challenges remain, in particular for girls, children with disabilities and children in disadvantaged and vulnerable situations, such as those living in armed conflicts and occupied territories.

As a young nation, for us the thirtieth-anniversary commemoration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been an opportune time for reflection in Timor-Leste and, just as importantly, to hear from children themselves.

Our Commissioner for Child Rights, in partnership with UNICEF and the United Nations country team, has organized a series of events, including by launching a campaign to combat violence against children and banning the involvement of children in informal commercial activities so as to prevent child labour and the exploitation of children. Discussion panels on child rights with members of Government, multi-stakeholders and children themselves have also been organized. These have highlighted the importance of tackling discrimination and violence against children at the family level, including through addressing stereotypes and negative attitudes towards children with disabilities.

We have also undertaken our second "blue show", held at our emblematic Christ statue in our capital, where an exhibition has been held of paintings by children depicting their rights, to raise awareness of child rights.

We believe that giving voice to children and young people is fundamental. In 2009 we established our youth parliament, composed of young Timorese between the ages of 12 and 17 who represent their peers from the municipalities in national debates on key issues and contribute recommendations to the policymakers. In 2016 we adopted our youth policy and in 2017 our national action plan for children.

The Government also provides a birth registration process at hospitals and clinics, including through the Ministry of Justice, to register births so as to ensure that every child has legal status and can be free from discrimination. Given our recent past, the Government has also adopted measures to enable children who were born of past human rights violations, including rape, in the years of military occupation, to acquire birth certificates, as they had previously been prevented from doing so because the father's identity could not be determined.

These actions reflect the commitment of the Government of Timor-Leste to building an environment that promotes respect, protection and the enjoyment of the rights of all girls and boys in our country, including those who live in remote and rural areas. However, and despite the extensive efforts undertaken by the Government, there is a recognition that improvements are still needed and that we continue to face challenges such as tackling malnutrition. With regard to education, the Government is continuing its efforts to improve the learning environment through effective teacher training; ensure that there are appropriate hygiene and sanitation facilities, especially for girls; and cater to the learning needs of children with disabilities.

To conclude, Timor-Leste is committed to the full realization of the children's rights set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. We are committed to continuing to undertake efforts to ensure that the rights of all girls and boys and young people are protected.

I congratulate all children on World Children's Day.

**Mr. Černjul** (Croatia): This year we are commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the most widely ratified convention in the history of the United Nations: the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The other important thirtieth anniversary is that of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

In relation to the death penalty, it is important to draw the attention to article 37 (a) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits imposing capital punishment on persons under 18 years of age at the time of the alleged offence. Today this norm is acknowledged by the 196 countries that have ratified the Convention.

Based on such broad acceptance, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2002 held that a norm of international customary law had emerged prohibiting the execution of offenders under the age of 18 years at the time of their crime and that this rule now constituted a norm of *jus cogens*.

However, there are concerns expressed by the International Commission against the Death Penalty that Croatia shares: reports suggest that in at least seven States, child offenders can be sentenced to death by lethal injection, hanging, shooting or stoning. Children, no matter what they have done, deserve better.

The lives of millions of children have improved through the progressive realization of the rights and fulfilment of the obligations enshrined in the Convention and its Optional Protocols. However, much more needs to be done.

Let me give two examples. Children are disproportionately affected by the consequences of climate change. It is the most pressing issue for all children around the globe. The right of every child is to have a habitable planet to live on. If climate change is not stopped, the majority of the rights guaranteed to children will consequently and inevitably be severely challenged.

Secondly, many children suffer from the consequences of having a parent sentenced to death or whose execution has been carried out. Children of parents sentenced to death are accurately described as secondary victims. The impact of potential sentences, including death sentences, on the child's best interests, which the Convention is aimed at protecting, should be considered at all times.

I call on all States to take appropriate measures, including legislative ones, to protect children and ensure that every child grows up in a safe and nurturing environment, free from existential threats, violence and discrimination.

**Mr. Amorín** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Uruguay wishes to reiterate once again its recognition of the invaluable contribution made by the Convention and its respective Optional Protocols.

Uruguay believes that the promotion and protection of human rights, especially those of vulnerable groups such as children, are a priority of its foreign policy, its



institutions and its public policy as a whole, and a true pillar of Uruguayan society.

The principal guiding lines of the Convention, including non-discrimination, the best interest of the child and participation, were ratified by Uruguay in September 1990 and later enshrined in the Code for Childhood and Adolescence of 2004. In recent years, a series of laws were passed that further strengthen the commitment of the Uruguayan State to those rights.

Thirty years after the signing of the Convention, unmistakable steps forward have been taken by Uruguayan society in realizing the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of children and adolescents.

Ensuring the continuity of this process means that we must set ourselves ambitious goals aimed at achieving a model of development that is focused on higher productivity and greater economic and environmental sustainability. The challenge of continued poverty reduction, especially in homes with children, fighting gender, ethnic, racial and territorial inequalities are all essential conditions for achieving a more democratic and egalitarian society in which children and adolescents can reach their full potential and have their voices heard.

In the light of the obligations that we have undertaken under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as applicable, I wish to highlight the following measures taken as a commitment to promoting, protecting and realizing the rights of children as we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention.

First, I would mention the pioneering Uruguay strategic plan to care for children and adolescents living on the street in our country. This initiative was taken in the framework of our response to general comment 21 issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Secondly, the Advisory and Consultative Council of the Board of Directors of the Institute for Children and Adolescents of Uruguay was established by law. Through the law, a participatory space has been created that is made up of adolescents aged 13 to 17-years old, who advise the Board of Directors of the Institute. The dynamics of the participatory space are bolstered and effectively validate the right of children and adolescents to express their opinions and be heard on matters of

concern to them, in accordance with general comment No. 12 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Another measure that we would like to mention is the modification of article 11 of the code on children and adolescents in order to bring normative domestic legislation into line with Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international norms involving the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents who are victims of violence in all its forms.

In conclusion, much remains to be done despite the progress made in the promotion and protection of children's rights. The celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child must mark a turning point and serve to firmly renew States' commitment to enforce those rights. We should adhere to what our highest authorities on the subject said, namely, that the best way to commemorate the Convention is through the words of children and adolescents, perhaps less than through our own.

**Ms. Mudallali (Lebanon):** This morning I received a letter from Tejaswini, a ninth-grade girl from Saint Anthony's High School in Hyderabad, India, which advocates for the environment, lobbying me with regard to an issue on behalf of her country. She is but one example of children around the world, like those Deputy-Secretary-General Amina Mohammed mentioned this morning (see A/74/PV.31), who are advocating and leading passionately to achieve the best for the world — our world.

Thirty years after the we all came together to speak on behalf children's rights and adopt the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we hear children's voices loud and clear throughout the world saying that they want change. The President of the General Assembly told them earlier that we hear them. I hope that that resonates around the world and that they are heard everywhere by all of us. It is important to recognize their angst, as they are the ones who will live in the future. And they are not confident that what we are leaving them is sustainable.

After 30 years, achievements are undeniable, as the Executive Director to UNICEF said earlier. Progress has been made on all rights of children — on education, health care, removing them from poverty, discrimination, abuse, exploitation and child labour. But, as we also heard earlier, the work is not finished,

progress is too slow and millions are being left behind. Millions of children are suffering from armed conflicts; millions are subjected to violence, bullying, child slavery, genital mutilation, exploitation and forced marriage; and millions are refugees or under occupation, suffering from violence, throughout the world.

Lebanon reaffirms today its steadfast commitment to fulfil all the promises that it made 30 years ago by creating a safe and better life for children in line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We take this opportunity to thank the UNICEF Office in Lebanon, whose efforts remain essential to driving child protection policies at all levels, from education to gender-based violence, child marriage, child protection and child labour. We also thank the civil- society activists and children human rights defenders, who are our true partners in fulfilling the promises of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

To the youth and children representatives here in the Hall I say, they are the hope for peace — the peace that the world has so far failed to give them. They are the hope of tomorrow that we look forward to, when they will do better than we ever have done and go farther than we ever thought we could.

Allow me to conclude by quoting the Lebanese poet Khalil Gibran:

“Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing  
for itself.  
You may give them your love, but not your thoughts.  
For they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies but not their souls.  
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.”

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, is a historic commitment to children throughout the world and plays an important role in the promotion and protection of their rights. Thirty years later, we continue to see tens of millions of children living in the shadows of war, poverty and disease. Fulfilling the vision of the Convention remains a daunting task.

Children are the hope and future of States and nations. The international community must look at the cause of children from a strategic perspective, as they will carry the baton for the development of humankind.

Doing so is our utmost responsibility for the sake of posterity.

First, we must ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes and create a peaceful environment for the healthy development of children. Armed conflicts led to the death or disability of 12,000 children in 2018 — an unprecedented number. The most effective way to protect children, therefore, is through conflict prevention and resolution. China has long been an advocate for the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue and consultations. China believes that the international community should truly help countries in conflict to protect children and support the efforts of the United Nations and the Security Council to protect children in armed conflicts.

Secondly, Governments must fulfil their primary responsibilities. Countries must view the development of children as an important responsibility and protect their rights, based on national realities. As it is committed to the principle of putting children first, China has integrated the development of children into its broader programme of national economic and social development. We have successively developed and implemented three action plans, known as the China National Programme for Child Development, and have adopted important laws on the protection of children’s rights, including the People’s Republic of China’s laws on the protection of minors and juvenile delinquency and provisions on the access to, and the protection of, children’s personal cyberinformation, which are part of a sophisticated legal system in this area.

Thirdly, we must promote and protect the rights of the child through development. Development is the master key to the solution of all problems. The international community should accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to provide a substantive foundation and guarantee the protection of the rights of the child. In benefiting from the development of the 70 years since the founding of the People’s Republic of China and the reform opening up China over the past 40 years, the cause of children in China has made historic achievements. Their needs for food and clothing are fully met. Their health continues to improve, with a decrease in the infant mortality rate to 6.1 per 1,000 in 2018. Their education is also steadily improving. Nine-year compulsory education has been universally implemented throughout the country, while in Tibet and the southern autonomous Xinjiang region children receive 15 years of free education.

Fourthly, we must step up our work to support vulnerable children so as to leave no one behind. The Chinese Government has always attached importance to helping the most vulnerable, such as sick and disabled children, orphans, homeless children and “left-behind” children. The Government responds firmly to crimes committed against children, including violence, abuse and trafficking. We have continuously expanded coverage to provide child welfare and increased the number of child-welfare institutions through a universal child welfare protection system. As rehabilitation provides a second chance for life, since 2014 China has helped 125,000 orphans with disabilities through rehabilitative surgery.

China will continue to fulfil its obligations under the Convention and engage in international cooperation to push forward the global cause for children.

**Mrs. Nusseibeh** (United Arab Emirates): I thank the President for convening today’s high-level meeting on the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I want to speak to all the girls and boys whom we have here today, because they, and boys and girls just like them around the world who might be watching, are why we are all here today. My son Laith always enjoys coming to the United Nations to watch me speak, but he complains that United Nations language is hard to understand. I am going to try to change that today.

Thirty years ago, when most of the moms and dads of the children here were children themselves — including me — every country around the world agreed on what children needed to be safe and happy like the children present. In many countries around the world, children just like those here do not have the chance to go to school. Instead, they go to work next to their parents on farms or in factories or help to raise their younger brothers and sisters. Many of those children do not get the doctor’s check-ups or the vitamins that they need, or vaccines, which mean a boring trip to the doctor for those present, but they mean painful illnesses for the children who do not get them.

Last year about 258 million children between the ages of 6 and 17 were not in school. Twelve million children around the world today, most of them girls, will likely never set foot inside a school at all. One hundred and forty-nine million children are not as tall as they should be, because their growth has been stunted from not having enough to eat.

To start to think about those problems, 30 years ago, we all signed an agreement here in this Hall in New York, and that agreement said that it was our goal that all children, boys and girls, wherever they were from and whatever language they spoke, deserved to be treated equally. It said that they all should be safe and grow up surrounded by love, happiness and understanding and that they have a right to an education and a healthy life, no matter where they were born. We have done better in those 30 years. Thanks to organizations such as UNICEF, a disease like polio that once stopped millions of children from being able to walk — or worse — is something that none of the children present here need to be afraid of any longer.

My own country, the United Arab Emirates, is making sure that we continue to improve the rights of children as well. In 2016, we passed a law protecting children, known as Wadeema’s Law. Wadeema was a young girl who taught us grown-ups in my country that we needed stronger laws to protect every child and to make sure that they can go to school and the doctor and grow up free from want and fear.

We also need to make sure that children in other countries have those rights and that freedom as well. In the next three years, my country will spend \$100 million for better schools and education for 870 million children across 89 different countries. I know how much being bullied at school can make children afraid to go to school, which is why we are working with UNICEF to stop bullying at a refugee camp in Jordan and Syria, so that those children that had to flee their homes do not have to face bullying as well.

My country believes that the agreement that we signed 30 years ago is more important than ever before, and that the children here today, and the millions like them around the world, should inspire us to make sure that we do not let them down.

**Mr. Rai** (Nepal): I thank the President for convening this high-level meeting to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The adoption of the Convention was another milestone in the progression of human rights, which not only inspired but obligated us to promote inclusive and rights-based plans and policies for our children.

We have made some progress in investing in our children’s health care, nutrition and education, as well as in protecting them from violence and abuse

and ensuring their safety and security. Despite those achievements, a vast number of children, even today, continue to suffer, and their suffering is further complicated due to the consequences of climate change, migration, terrorism and cybercrimes, among many others. Those challenges call for collaboration and cooperation at the global level.

The Constitution of Nepal guarantees the rights of the child as fundamental rights. Nepal has incorporated the Convention's core principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, survival and development and respect for the views of the child in its laws, as well as in its policies and programmes. The Government of Nepal enacted the updated the children's act in 2018, which recognizes children as individual rights-holders and guarantees their protection and well-being.

Besides that, our national child policy, periodic plans and programmes and institutional arrangements in all tiers of governance — federal, provincial and local — provide special protection and safeguards to children, in line with the provisions of the Convention. The effective implementation of our initiatives — such as on free school education, free immunization, support to children in backward communities and child-friendly local governance — has yielded encouraging results. Over the years, we have been able to reduce child mortality and maternal mortality to 39 per 1,000 live births and 239 per 100,000 live births. All ill practices in the sociocultural realm are criminalized, with a steadfast commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination against children in the country.

In conclusion, children are our future. Nepal is therefore committed to investing in and empowering our children to build a better Nepal, where our vision of “Happy Nepali and Prosperous Nepal” can come true.

**Mrs. Zappia** (Italy): Italy welcomes this high-level meeting of the General Assembly, which allows us to focus on the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Last September, we were proud to join the voluntary global pledge that reaffirmed our collective commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Convention. Italy has been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1991, as well as its related Additional Protocols. In 2012, we ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. In 2017, during our latest term on the Security

Council, we promoted the adoption of resolution 2388 (2017) against trafficking in persons, which specifically addressed the issue of the protection of minors. The rights of children in armed conflict are also a priority for us, and we fully support the mandates of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

The full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of the underlying objectives of our international cooperation activities. Children's care and development inspire many of our interventions in the areas of health, education and social inclusion. We invest in programmes that look at the broader spectrum of children's development, with the aim of improving the living conditions of children, better protecting them against any form of abuse and increasing their access to early childhood care, education and development, while supporting the wellness of their mothers, from pregnancy to motherhood. Italy is an engaged donor and partner at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. We remain committed to supporting key United Nations development system partners, such as UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme, and other children-driven programmes.

Thirty years ago, building on the unique momentum created by the Convention and convinced of the need to accelerate its implementation, Italy offered to constitute the first international child development centre devoted to research and solutions for children. Since then, Italy has hosted and constantly funded the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, which has a mandate to contribute to an emerging global ethics for children. The Centre is located in a 600-year-old structure historically devoted to children's care — Ospedale degli Innocenti — which is considered the oldest continuously operating children's care institution in the world.

This year, Italy devoted additional resources to highlight the role of the Centre on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention. I would like to mention the UNICEF-Innocenti Film Festival, the first international film festival entirely dedicated to the representation of childhood in the world, with a special focus on the global South, and the inauguration of a conference series entitled “Leading Minds for Children and Young People”, with the participation of high-level speakers from Governments, international

organizations, academia, the private sector and children, of course.

Italy is aware that much more needs to be done and stands ready to live up to that challenge. We are fully committed to continue and intensify our efforts, in cooperation with the other Member States and the

United Nations system, to help children enjoy their childhoods within peaceful and inclusive societies.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We shall continue the plenary segment tomorrow at 10 a.m. in the Hall to hear the remaining speakers.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*