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Chair: Mr. Braun (Luxembourg)
later: Ms. Eyheralde Geymonat (Vice-Chair) (Uruguay)

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

Agenda item 26: Advancement of women (continued)

(a) Advancement of women (continued) ([A/74/38](#), [A/74/137](#), [A/74/224](#) and [A/74/235](#))

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (continued) ([A/74/220](#) and [A/74/222](#))

1. **Mr. Ten-Pow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the CARICOM member States recognized the essential role of women in socioeconomic and political development in the region and continued to make strides towards the achievement of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals by mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development of their national policies and programmes, enhancing education and training opportunities for women and girls and increasing the participation of women in leadership and decision-making. With the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action fast approaching, it was important to measure the progress that had been made towards achieving the goals that had been set and examine the reasons for shortfalls. The CARICOM member States continued to seek support from their development partners to build their capacity to collect reliable data and information to serve as a basis for policies and action plans. Those countries welcomed the support that they had received from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in preparing national reports on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

2. All CARICOM member States promoted literacy and education as a means to foster the advancement and economic empowerment of women and girls. In the 2018 Global Gender Gap Report, Barbados, the Bahamas and Jamaica had been among the countries sharing the top ranking for educational attainment, and Barbados and the Bahamas were ranked second and third, respectively, for economic participation and opportunities. However, while women in the region accessed secondary and tertiary education at a higher rate than men, they were less likely than men to be employed, tended to have lower-level and lower-paying jobs, more likely to suffer economic vulnerability, did three times as much unpaid work. Furthermore, gender-based stereotypes had resulted in occupational segregation.

3. Despite those challenges, women in the region played crucial roles in promoting sustained and

inclusive economic growth and ending poverty. The number of women involved in decision-making and holding high-level positions in Government and elected office was growing, although gender parity had not yet been achieved. CARICOM welcomed the increase in the representation of women in the professional and higher categories at the United Nations, which should set an example for the rest of the world.

4. Violence against women gravely undermined efforts to empower women and girls and achieve gender equality. The CARICOM countries, with the support of UN-Women and other partners, were conducting the first prevalence surveys on gender-based violence in the region as part of their efforts to better understand and address its underlying causes. They were also continuing to review and strengthen their national laws on the matter and implement strategies to address unequal power relationships between men and women. CARICOM supported the engagement of men and boys in efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment. A multifaceted approach that included public awareness campaigns, the engagement of community leaders, measures to encourage the sharing of parenting and household responsibilities and a robust legislative framework could bring about significant change.

5. Efforts to improve the situation of rural women and girls were being undermined by the devastating effects of climate change, such as the destruction of homes and agricultural crops, food insecurity and health challenges. Another significant factor affecting the ability of States to achieve their objectives in relation to the advancement of women was a lack of resources. In that connection, the CARICOM countries looked forward to benefiting from enhanced international cooperation and development assistance that prioritized gender equality and women's empowerment. The Community's priorities included ensuring equal pay and equal sharing of unpaid work, ending sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls, improving educational opportunities for women and girls, establishing gender-responsive universal health coverage and achieving equal participation in decision-making.

6. **Mr. Bourtembourg** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its strong emphasis on ensuring the equality and empowerment of women and girls,

strengthened accountability in respect of the gender equality commitments entered into under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security. Many States had implemented legislative and other measures to ensure equality and combat discrimination, and the situation of women with regard to early and forced marriage, social inclusion and recognition of the role of women and girls in society had improved around the world.

7. The European Union was working with partners such as civil society organizations and women human rights defenders to end gender inequality. It was cognizant of the common obligation to fund and implement policies and practical measures to combat violence against women and girls, protect survivors and ensure that perpetrators were held accountable. In the past year, the European Union had given renewed impetus to its policy framework on women and peace and security. It was committed to increasing its efforts to ensure gender equality in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. It would also do more to combat sexual violence in conflict zones, including by supporting the Global Survivors Fund. The work of civil society organizations and human rights defenders was crucial to efforts to advance the status of women and should be recognized and protected. The European Union therefore continued to speak out against the shrinking space for civil society and support human rights defenders through political and financial actions.

8. No country was on track to achieve gender equality by 2030, and at the current pace it would take more than a century to achieve global gender equality. Dialogue and joint efforts among all relevant actors were key to increasing the pace of progress in that regard. The European Union remained committed to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their respective review conferences. In that context, the European Union reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of all individuals to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. There should be universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and education, including comprehensive sexuality education. The European Union reiterated its commitment to achieving

Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

9. **Mr. Salovaara** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), said that promoting the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls was a priority for those countries in all areas of their foreign policy. Moreover, their national development plans were guided by the 2030 Agenda, including cross-cutting Sustainable Development Goal 5, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

10. Successful climate action required the equal participation of women at the political level, in decision-making processes and in the labour market. Women had a particularly important role to play in combating climate change as a result of their role in producing food and ensuring the welfare of families in many communities. It was also essential to ensure that women and girls were able to enjoy their rights to access water and sanitation, as inadequate facilities had a disproportionate impact on them.

11. The Nordic countries continued to strongly support UN-Women and the objectives of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). However, they were concerned about the resistance to gender equality work worldwide, in particular in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Gender equality and the realization of the rights of women and girls could not be achieved unless they were able to make informed choices and have control over their own bodies. Universal comprehensive sexuality education, such as that provided to all schoolchildren in the Nordic countries, was essential in that regard.

12. Civil society had an important role to play in advancing the rights of women and girls, but women human rights defenders, in particular those defending sexual and reproductive rights, often faced discrimination, detention, violence or even death. Civil society participation at the United Nations should be guaranteed, and the Organization should work to protect women human rights defenders around the world.

13. The negative impact that technology could have on the rights and status of women and girls must be addressed, including by investing in relevant education for girls and encouraging their involvement in the design, development and monitoring of new technologies. Promoting technology literacy among women and girls and ensuring their equal participation would help to combat the gender stereotypes and gender-based harassment and cyberbullying that were liable to thrive in the digital environment. Men and boys would also benefit from gender equality and should be

involved in bringing about change. The enjoyment of full and equal rights by women and girls was a prerequisite for sustainable development and peace. It should therefore be taken into consideration in all policymaking. Any attempt to undo the progress that had been made towards the advancement of women was unacceptable.

14. **Mr. Silk** (Marshall Islands), welcoming the improvement in the status of women within the United Nations system, said that more practical action and political will were needed to ensure the advancement of women at the international level. While the Pacific region still had one of the lowest rates of women parliamentarians in the world, the election of a woman President in 2016 had been a major step forward for the Marshall Islands and an unprecedented number of women were now running for office.

15. His Government had increased legal protections for victims of domestic violence, which had led to increased reporting and greater use of judicial orders. However, greater political and individual will would be needed at all levels to bring about the necessary societal and behaviour changes and address the root causes of gender-based violence, which was still unacceptably common. His Government was committed to combating human trafficking, which particularly affected women and girls, and would consider taking action in relation to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

16. Women's empowerment must become a cross-cutting element of all principal areas of action, including climate change adaptation. His Government supported the application of objective, human rights-based criteria with a strong gender lens in the handling of situations of concern by the Human Rights Council. Member States had common gender-related goals and, despite their diverse views on how best to achieve them, must work together to build political will to ensure that the advancement of women held its rightful place at the centre of human rights activities.

17. **Ms. Fréchin** (Switzerland) said that her Government was committed to eliminating all forms of gender-based violence and ensuring gender equality and the realization of women's rights. Recently, protests had been springing up around the world, including in her country, to demand gender equality, the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights, and an end to violence against women. Her delegation noted with concern the trend towards questioning the recognition of sexual and reproductive health rights, which had been evident at the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women and during the negotiations on the political

declaration of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 74/2. Those negotiations had unfortunately resulted in a decision to reflect in the declaration only the minimum standards established in the 2030 Agenda. Sexual and reproductive health and rights were of paramount importance to health and well-being and contributed significantly to poverty reduction, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

18. Switzerland welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on a human rights-based approach to mistreatment and violence against women in reproductive health services with a focus on childbirth and obstetric violence ([A/74/137](#)). All member States should implement the report's recommendations swiftly and effectively.

19. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action offered a crucial opportunity to promote debate on the 12 critical areas of concern set out therein, which included violence against women and the human rights of women. The twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) was a reminder of the need to reaffirm the common responsibility for and commitment to gender equality and women's rights, which were the fundamental elements required for a just, peaceful and inclusive world.

20. *Ms. Eyheralde Geymonat (Uruguay), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

21. **Ms. Al Abtan** (Iraq) said that her Government considered women's empowerment to be a national duty. Convinced of the crucial role that rural women could play in enhancing food security and combating poverty, her Government was implementing programmes to enhance the knowledge and skills of rural women, train them in the use of modern agricultural methods, improve their health and increase their awareness of environmental issues. Awareness-raising programmes concerning gender equality and the social and economic rights of women, including in relation to health, land ownership and education, were also being executed. However, climate change, in particular the desertification of agricultural land, was posing a serious challenge to efforts to improve the situation of rural women in her country.

22. Her Government had made progress in advancing the situation of women, despite the difficult security situation linked to the terrorist threat faced by her country. It had adopted laws to prohibit discrimination against women and support their right to political participation. As a result, women from various religious

backgrounds were now represented in parliament and the provincial councils. Women were also guaranteed equal educational and employment opportunities under the law. A strategy to combat violence against women and protect victims was being implemented, and a draft law on domestic violence had been drafted.

23. **Ms. Miyazaki** (Japan) said that her Government had adopted legislative amendments to better protect victims of domestic violence and broaden employers' obligations with regard to the participation of women in the workforce. As part of the Government's efforts to promote the empowerment of women through international cooperation and development assistance, it had committed to providing quality education and development opportunities for at least 4 million women and girls in developing countries between 2018 and 2020.

24. Her Government had contributed approximately \$24 million to UN-Women in 2018 and would continue to support and engage in dialogue with that entity. It had also made significant contributions in support of initiatives to empower women and girls affected by conflict in the Middle East and Africa and to enhance judicial measures to prevent sexual violence in conflict situations. Japan would continue to promote the advancement of women through its cooperation with the United Nations, Member States, the private sector and civil society.

25. **Ms. Bogyay** (Hungary) said that her delegation welcomed the efforts undertaken to improve the status of women within the United Nations system. At the national level, her Government was committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls by amending the Criminal Code and establishing crisis centres and shelters to provide comprehensive services to survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. Social policies, including three-year paid parental leave and free childcare, had been put in place to enable women to excel in their careers without sacrificing their family commitments or, if they wished, to devote themselves to becoming full-time mothers. A comprehensive action plan had recently been launched with a view to eliminating income insecurity for women with multiple children. Under the plan, newly-married women were entitled to apply for a \$33,000 loan, which would they did not have to pay back if they had three children; young married couples intending to have two or more children were entitled to housing subsidies and mortgage relief; and women with four or more children were exempt from paying income tax. Budapest was now home to a centre dedicated to providing vocational training, career services, crisis intervention, counselling, mentoring and childcare for single parents.

Hungary was committed to ensuring that all women and girls were able to enjoy their rights and able to fulfil their potential, free from discrimination.

26. **Ms. Oppermann** (Luxembourg) said that her Government was concerned that human rights, including the rights of women and girls, were increasingly coming under attack in some States and that voices in international forums were seeking to undo progress that had been made in recent decades. It was unacceptable that, at the current rate of progress, it would take 108 years for the world to reach gender parity. Moreover, feminist foreign policies were not only promoting the advancement of women but were also crucial for the establishment of the fair, peaceful and inclusive societies envisaged in the 2030 Agenda. Her Government's foreign policy therefore included efforts to enhance the representation and participation of women at all levels. Its 2018 action plan on women and peace and security was aligned with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and it had dedicated development cooperation resources to support the She Decides initiative, the United Nations Population Fund, UN-Women and other United Nations agencies working to promote women's empowerment. Luxembourg also supported microcredit programmes to promote women's entrepreneurship and was taking action to combat violence against women around the world.

27. **Ms. Buist-Catherwood** (New Zealand) said that respect for sexual and reproductive rights was crucial to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the adoption of the political declaration of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, which highlighted the importance of sexual and reproductive health care. New Zealand had been the first country to grant women the right to vote and had a strong statutory framework in place to protect women from all forms of discrimination. However, the country continued to experience high levels of domestic and gender-based violence, a pay gap, pay inequity and a low representation of women in leadership positions in the private sector. Her Government was working to ensure that women and girls were able to thrive in a society free from violence, discrimination and harassment, achieve financial security, and have their contributions to society recognized and valued.

28. Many women and girls around the world were being left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. That situation would be exacerbated if attempts to erode collectively agreed international norms and standards were successful. New Zealand was determined to defend the hard-won rights of women and girls in the face of the increasing politicization of human

rights and the related efforts to roll back advances that had been made with regard to bodily autonomy, comprehensive sexuality education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender-based violence. Her Government reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the advancement of the rights of women and girls everywhere and urged Member States to address barriers to gender equality and full respect for the human rights of women and girls.

29. **Ms. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that the upcoming anniversaries of multiple instruments concerning the advancement of women should serve as an opportunity to take stock of the progress that had been made and actively resist attempts to undermine those achievements. Some forms of discrimination against women and girls had increased in recent decades, and gender inequality continued to prevent women from fulfilling their potential and to deprive them of basic rights and opportunities. The current global challenges could only be overcome if women and girls were recognized as agents of change. Empowering women meant addressing structural barriers to women's advancement and developing legal frameworks that promoted gender equality.

30. The Government and private sector of Liechtenstein were committed to combating slavery and human trafficking, which were currently among the most severe human rights violations and primarily affected women and girls. Through a public-private partnership, Liechtenstein and its partners had developed a framework to help the global financial sector prevent and combat those human rights violations by means of sustainable and innovative financing, responsible lending and investment, and appropriate compliance and regulation.

31. Although women and girls were disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence, in certain security contexts a significant number of victims were men and boys. Her delegation therefore welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#), in which the Council specifically requested that the situation of men and boys be taken into account in the monitoring, analysis and reporting on conflict-related sexual violence.

32. **Mr. Arbeiter** (Canada) said that the advancement of women's rights was a moral imperative that was also associated with economic and social benefits. Multilateral engagement on the issue had led to successes, such as the adoption of the United Nations System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment and the establishment of the Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment. The Committee should build on and

consolidate the achievements represented by the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization and the General Assembly resolutions on women and peace and security. His delegation would continue to work closely with other Member States and would promote a global multifaceted approach to the advancement of women.

33. **Ms. Gunasekera** (Sri Lanka) said that important but slow progress had been made towards achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. A comprehensive review should be conducted to examine achievements and identify remaining gaps and barriers. Women made an invaluable contribution to the socioeconomic development of her country, where they represented half of the workforce. The world's first woman Prime Minister had been elected in Sri Lanka in 1960, and women were currently serving as members of Parliament and local governments and occupying high-level posts in government ministries and the judiciary. Quotas were in place to further promote participation by women in politics. However, cultural norms still prevented some women from embarking on political careers.

34. Sri Lanka had seen first-hand that climate change affected the livelihoods and well-being of women and men differently and that its impacts amplified existing gender inequalities. Her delegation therefore called for gender gaps to be addressed systematically as part of the global effort to combat climate change, with a view to enhancing the climate resilience of households, communities and nations. The 30-year conflict in her country had resulted in a large number of households headed by women, who had been forced to assume a heavy financial burden. In response, her Government had adopted an action plan for woman-headed households, which addressed areas such as health, income security and psychosocial well-being. With support from UN-Women and other partners, her Government was executing a number of projects to promote women's empowerment, including through the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

35. Her Government strongly condemned all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment, and had adopted a policy framework and action plan to address sexual and gender-based violence. Measures related to budgeting, policy formulation and awareness-raising had been taken to mainstream a gender perspective in all government ministries. Sri Lanka remained firmly committed to the promotion and protection of women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as crucial elements of inclusive and sustainable development.

36. **Mr. Sukhee** (Mongolia) said that his Government was committed to the implementation of its international commitments concerning the advancement of all women and girls and the protection of their rights. Over the past 25 years, it had made a particular effort to promote the economic empowerment of women and implement the legislative, policy and practical changes necessary to enhance the protection of their rights. It had strengthened gender equality by adopting provisions concerning the family, domestic violence, maternal and child health, and gender equality. Its sustainable development policy document had been designed to ensure gender equality and equal access to social benefits. A national committee on gender equality, chaired by the Prime Minister, was mandated to ensure cross-sectoral coordination for the implementation of gender-responsive policies, planning and budgeting processes. Various social protection benefits were available to pregnant women and mothers, and measures to increase the salaries and pensions of civil servants and reduce the rate of pension loans had direct benefits for women.

37. However, his Government was concerned that 58 per cent of Mongolian women who had been in a relationship had experienced physical, sexual, emotional or economic violence at the hands of their partners. Improvements to the implementation and monitoring of existing policies and programmes would be key to achieving his Government's objectives concerning women's rights and gender equality. Efforts must be accelerated to improve the situation of socioeconomically disadvantaged rural women and girls around the world.

38. **Ms. Raz** (Afghanistan) said that, for 40 years, Afghan women had shouldered the burden of a conflict that they had had no part in instigating or prolonging. Her Government, recognizing that making amends for that historical injustice was vital for a prosperous Afghanistan, had made the advancement of women a priority. Her Government was currently implementing the second phase of its national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), which contained specific measures to increase the participation of women in decision-making processes concerning security and peace. Moreover, 16 women were serving on the High Peace Council of Afghanistan, and 30 per cent of the more than 3,000 participants at the consultative peace loya jirga held in 2019 had been women.

39. Her Government was strengthening partnerships with rural communities to improve living conditions and promote financial independence among women. It had also developed a national strategy to prevent violence

against women and had established a deputy office for the elimination of violence against women within the Attorney-General's office in order to increase women's access to justice in every province. Twenty shelters had been established to protect victims of violence and witnesses in their cases. An anti-harassment law had also been adopted. Her Government was aware of the difficulties suffered by women in Afghanistan and would work tirelessly to ensure that women were able to enjoy the recognition, participation and representation they deserved. Her own appointment as the first woman Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations was a positive step.

40. **Ms. Brink** (Australia) said that the time had come to take stock of the progress that had been made towards eradicating gender discrimination and inequality, which were still pervasive. Her Government was committed to addressing the structural inequalities and harmful attitudes that underpinned violence against women. That would require significant investment and the elimination of harmful practices, such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation. A national plan to reduce violence against women was being implemented and, at the international level, her Government supported the Trust Fund for Victims of Violence against Women and the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence.

41. Australia supported actions to address discriminatory laws and policies that limited women's economic participation. All sectors were encouraged to harness the benefits of employing a diverse workforce. Her Government was also convinced that sexual and reproductive health and rights were a fundamental aspect of women's rights and crucial for advancing gender equality. Moreover, almost all birth- and pregnancy-related deaths could be prevented if all women and girls had access to proper sexual and reproductive health services.

42. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that global efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls had been slow, and the effects of conflict, climate change and mass displacement had further exacerbated the situation. Women and girls around the world would continue to suffer disproportionately from violence in all spheres of life until their rights were fully recognized. The milestones that would be marked in 2020 provided opportunities to take stock of the progress made and the remaining challenges. Her Government remained committed to improving the living standards of women and girls and ensuring their full and equal participation in all spheres of life. Women and men were equal under Turkish law, and a

parliamentary commission for equal opportunities monitored developments at the national and international levels. A recent amendment to the Constitution had introduced the concept of positive discrimination. An action plan for the empowerment of women for the period 2018–2023 was being implemented by the public administration in cooperation with civil society, universities and the private sector. Her Government also continued to support the work of the regional office of UN-Women in Istanbul and other United Nations efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

43. Turkey had taken legislative and practical measures to combat violence against women. It had contributed to the elaboration of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and had adopted a national action plan to address the problem. Shelters, counselling centres and hotlines had been put in place to protect and support affected women. With regard to women and peace and security, her Government continued to provide for the humanitarian, educational and health needs of women and girls under temporary protection in Turkey after being forced to flee their countries of origin. The Turkish authorities, in cooperation with international partners, were implementing robust measures to prevent those women and girls from becoming victims of human trafficking.

44. **Mr. Rivera Roldan** (Peru) said that his Government was actively working to mainstream a gender perspective in all public policies, with a view to ensuring equal rights, preventing discrimination and enabling all citizens to fulfil their potential. It had also adopted a national gender equality policy in 2019. In addition to providing assistance to victims of gender-based violence, his Government was taking a preventive approach to violence against women and girls by working to change social and cultural patterns perpetuating the unequal power relations that legitimized and exacerbated gender-based violence in all spheres of life. To promote women's economic independence and participation, his Government was working to ensure equal pay and opportunities at work and a fair division of labour in the home. It was promoting women's political participation and had already achieved gender equality at the ministerial level. It was also continuing its efforts to apply a gender lens at every level and in every sector of public administration.

45. At the 2019 Climate Action Summit, Peru had co-led the Social and Political Drivers of Climate Action Coalition in calling for the implementation of climate-related actions that would contribute to gender equality

and the empowerment of women and girls by taking into account the differences in how climate change affected women and men. States must identify and analyse the remaining obstacles to gender equality, women's empowerment and the full exercise of women's rights and implement measures to overcome them, guided by the frameworks established in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and relevant regional instruments.

46. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that his Government had made gender equality a priority, as a means of promoting women's rights, empowerment and leadership. To enable women to fully contribute to society and the common good, it was important for national judicial, institutional and political systems to recognize and uphold the equal rights of women with regard to the ownership and control of land, livelihood resources, seeds, agricultural inputs, markets, credit, loans and aid.

47. His country was ranked fifth in the world for gender equality, having reduced inequality by 80.9 per cent between 2006 and 2018. The adoption of relevant laws and public policies had enabled women to play a central role in institutional decision-making in Nicaragua. There were now more women than men in the judiciary and the executive branch, 50 per cent of councillors were women, and women held high-level positions such as Vice-President, President of the Supreme Court and Vice-President of the National Assembly. His Government was convinced that economic, social and political progress could not be made without the full participation of women.

48. **Ms. Aurrecoechea Durán** (Mexico) said that States had an obligation to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, which were essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Gender parity had been achieved in the Mexican Congress, which had recently amended the Constitution to guarantee parity among public officials at all levels of government.

49. Her delegation was concerned about the polarization in multilateral forums that was hindering the advancement of the rights of women and girls. An incomprehensible number of voices sought to deny women control over their own bodies and sexuality, despite the evidence that women continued to risk their lives and die because of a lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services. The needs and concerns of women and girls, in particular those who were particularly vulnerable or suffered multiple forms of

discrimination, were being ignored. Her Government would continue to defend the human rights of women at every stage of life. In that connection, it would work towards ensuring that women and girls were able to enjoy their right to a life free from violence and discrimination, including by addressing structural inequalities resulting from patriarchy and the power imbalance between women and men.

50. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action would provide an opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to achieving gender equality, examine the global situation and identify the gaps that needed to be addressed most urgently. Furthermore, the Generation Equality Forum, led by Mexico and France, would be a chance for stakeholders to consider together, under the leadership of civil society, ways to achieve gender equality by 2030. Mexico would continue to make the rights of women and girls a cross-cutting priority of its feminist foreign policy.

51. **Ms. Mwale** (Zambia) said that her Government had achieved gender parity at primary school level and had increased women's participation in decision-making processes, including in the political sphere. It had also enhanced women's access to social service by expanding services targeting women and girls. It planned to expand an effective social cash transfer programme that was already providing assistance to 632,000 vulnerable households, 72.2 per cent of which were headed by women. A livelihood programme aimed at equipping 75,000 vulnerable women with life and business skills and grants was also being implemented. School fees had been reduced and a specific programme was being implemented to keep girls in school. Some 120 women-led cooperatives had been provided with tractors and other agricultural equipment in order to increase production and reduce the physical burden of farm work. The construction of transport and sanitation infrastructure, schools and health posts would also benefit women.

52. **Ms. Bakytbekkyzy** (Kazakhstan) said that legislation, policy directives, programmes and services must be used to promote the participation of women in efforts to strengthen peace and security, achieve sustainable development, eradicate poverty, combat climate change, protect human rights, establish peace, and counter crime, violent extremism and terrorism. Measures must be taken to combat the structural causes of gender inequality, such as unpaid care work, women's limited control over assets and property and unequal participation in private and public decision-making. Non-compliance with the Beijing Platform for Action and other relevant instruments should be addressed

through capacity-building, financing and monitoring. High-quality data concerning all aspects of gender equality would be crucial in that regard.

53. Her Government had adopted progressive policies and programmes to combat human trafficking, ensure the equal participation of women in the economic and political arenas and protect women from violence. It was working to enhance the economic status of women, develop women's entrepreneurship and strengthen the family through gender equality. The importance of promoting maternal health, the economic empowerment of women and women's rights was underscored in the national development strategy. Women, who constituted 52 per cent of her country's population, represented 57 per cent of students graduating from universities, contributed 40 per cent of the gross domestic product and ran 40 per cent of small and medium-sized businesses.

54. **Mr. Isnomo** (Indonesia) said that women were still being left behind owing to poverty, barriers to participation in the labour force and high maternal mortality rates. His Government was committed to ensuring that every woman was able to receive health services and had recently launched a national health insurance scheme that covered 83 per cent of the population. To enable women to reach their full potential, his Government was investing in education and implementing programmes to help rural women build their skills and access the financing they needed to establish small and medium-sized enterprises. A national task force established to defend migrant workers was working to protect women migrant workers from violence and other inhumane treatment. The country had taken legislative measures to increase women's political participation. Currently eight ministers and 20 per cent of parliamentarians were women. His Government was also committed to increasing the number of women peacekeepers.

55. **Ms. Mele Colifa** (Equatorial Guinea) said that Member States should make the most of the various anniversaries in 2020 to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. States should ensure that women and girls were able to enjoy their rights to high-quality education and access to health care; strengthen laws intended to eliminate discrimination and damaging practices that hindered the advancement of women and girls; do more to enable displaced women and girls to participate in decisions that affected them; and enhance their efforts to include women and girls with disabilities.

56. Climate change posed a serious threat to the approximately 80 per cent women in Africa who lived

in rural areas, and consequently to the socioeconomic development of the continent. Climate change could exacerbate food insecurity and malnutrition and increase the number of internally displaced women and girls. In Equatorial Guinea, more than 60 per cent of women lived in rural areas and were dependent on agriculture. To support the agricultural sector, the national bank had created a credit scheme for women farmers, and roads had been paved to facilitate the transit of goods. Urban development plans were in place to promote the socioeconomic development of women in most cities. There was no pay gap in Equatorial Guinea. A number of health services were provided free of charge, including maternal and neonatal care, caesarean deliveries, treatment for obstetric fistula, care for older persons, HIV/AIDS testing and antiretroviral drugs. Her delegation had welcomed the adoption, during its presidency of the Security Council, of resolution 2457 (2019) concerning the African Union's goal of silencing the guns in Africa by 2020, which would facilitate the advancement of women.

57. **Ms. Khusanova** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation looked forward to the stocktaking of the activities of UN-Women that would take place on the occasion of its tenth anniversary. Her delegation reaffirmed its support for the Commission on the Status of Women, which was an important forum for constructive dialogue. While her delegation was generally pleased with the work of UN-Women over the past year, successful execution of its mandate hinged on close cooperation with the relevant United Nations entities in support of decisions taken by intergovernmental mechanisms, and it should provide assistance on the ground only at the request and with the permission of the State concerned. It should not duplicate the efforts of other United Nations bodies or have work or functions arbitrarily or improperly assigned to it. With regard to gender equality in the United Nations system, candidate selection should not be based solely on gender but also on efficiency, competence, integrity and equitable geographical representation. In addition, steps should be taken to correct the gender imbalance in UN-Women, in keeping with United Nations policy.

58. Her Government was committed to implementing its international commitments concerning the advancement of women and had duly submitted its reports on the implementation of the relevant international instruments to which it was a party. It was open to engaging in a respectful exchange of views in the area of gender equality, with due consideration for the unique characteristics and traditions of the different Member States.

59. **Mr. Khaopaseuth** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his Government recognized the important roles played by women in socioeconomic development and political life and had therefore put in place laws, strategies, public policies and action plans to promote women's empowerment, gender equality and the rights and interests of women and girls. The percentage of women parliamentarians had increased to 27.5 in the current Government, compared with 25 per cent in the previous Government, and more than half of small and medium-sized enterprises were owned by women. A draft law on gender equality was expected to be approved by the end of 2019.

60. His country was an active participant in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) initiatives to promote the advancement of women. It had presented its combined eighth and ninth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2018, and the recommendations received after the submission of earlier reports had been translated and disseminated to government officials, stakeholders and the general public. Many of those recommendations had been incorporated into the national development plans for the periods 2011–2015 and 2016–2020. His delegation looked forward to working closely with international partners, the United Nations system and ASEAN to review global implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. His Government welcomed the support and assistance received from its development partners in its efforts to promote the advancement of women.

61. **Ms. Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her country's Constitution and laws ensured that women were equal to men in all aspects of political, economic, cultural and social life. Syrian women had been active in combating occupation and oppression by the Ottoman and French empires and had enjoyed the right to vote since 1948, earlier than women in any other Arab country. The percentage of women ambassadors had increased from 11 per cent in 2005 to 15 per cent in 2015, there were a significant number of women in the People's Council, and the current Vice-President of the country and the president of the counter-terrorism court were women. The law on personal status had been modernized in 2019.

62. Her Government was working to support and empower women in the face of terrorism, occupation, aggression and unilateral coercive measures. Intensive efforts would be required to address the serious challenges faced by Syrian women, who were disproportionately affected by the terrorist war being waged against the country in an effort to destroy its

ethical and humanitarian values, which was undoing centuries of achievement and development. Women had been subjected to the practices of extremist groups, which deprived them of their rights to health and education, or displaced them as they fled. Moreover, Syrian and other Arab women continued to suffer as a result of the occupation by Israel of the Syrian Golan, the crimes committed by the illegal Global Coalition to Counter Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and the conditions in refugee camps in neighbouring countries resulting from illegal measures taken against her country by other States.

63. **Mr. Zambrano Ortiz** (Ecuador) said that his country's strong legal framework on women's rights included constitutional recognition of gender equality. Moreover, his Government was implementing a national development plan that mainstreamed a gender perspective and promoted equal participation in public and private life as a means of ensuring inclusive socioeconomic growth in harmony with nature. Ecuador had ratified all United Nations human rights conventions and all international conventions concerning the promotion and protection of the rights of women. It was working towards fulfilling its obligations under those instruments, including by developing appropriate public policies and by submitting reports to the treaty bodies and implementing their recommendations. It was also making an effort to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5. While women and girls around the world continued to face multiple forms of discrimination, his Government was constantly enhancing its efforts to ensure the enjoyment of equal rights and eradicate discrimination.

64. **Ms. Niculae** (Romania) said that her country's national agency for equal opportunities between women and men played an active role in ensuring the adoption of appropriate legislation and public policies. A national strategy was in place to mainstream a gender perspective in education and employment, enhance compliance with relevant labour laws and achieve a more equal division of labour in the home. The gender pay gap in her country was well below the European Union average. Romania was encouraging female entrepreneurship and, as President of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2019, had helped to facilitate the adoption of the European Union directive on work-life balance for parents and carers. Approximately 21 per cent of deputies and 15 per cent of senators in the Parliament of Romania were women, as were the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and a number of other ministers.

65. Romania was a party to instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and was contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5. At the national level, equal opportunities legislation had been amended to establish the concept of gender-based violence as defined in the Istanbul Convention, and companies were encouraged to employ gender equality experts. New measures to protect victims of domestic violence had also been adopted.

66. **Mr. Zhang Zhe** (China) said that the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had ushered in a new era for the advancement of women. States should enhance their efforts to achieve the women-related elements of the Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on poverty reduction and the promotion of women's education and health. They should also step up their efforts to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In the light of the growing imbalance in global development, developed countries should provide more support to developing countries to ensure the advancement of women around the world.

67. In the 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Government had worked to promote gender equality and tap into the potential of women by taking them into account in socioeconomic development policies. More than 100 laws had been adopted to protect the rights and interests of women, and measures had been taken to benefit them in the areas of poverty reduction, entrepreneurship, health and education. Women represented 40 per cent of the Chinese workforce and 55 per cent of the country's entrepreneurs. Approximately one quarter of the members of the National Congress of the Communist Party of China were women. As part of its international cooperation efforts, his Government had provided training for more than 20,000 women from developing countries in skills such as public administration, forestry, animal husbandry and fisheries. China would continue to support UN-Women and international cooperation to promote the advancement of women.

68. **Ms. Nemroff** (United States of America) said that societies that empowered women to participate fully in civil and economic life were more prosperous and peaceful. Her Government was continuing its long tradition of supporting women's empowerment by adopting a whole-of-government approach to advancing women's economic empowerment at the global level, in an effort to promote stability, employment and economic growth around the world. Through its Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative,

her Government was working with its partners to support workforce development and skills training; help women entrepreneurs access markets, capital and networks; and remove legislative and regulatory barriers to women's full economic participation. Her Government had committed to providing \$300 million per year to the Initiative and had obtained millions of dollars of support from the private sector. It had also launched a global call for solutions to close the digital gender divide. It had adopted legislation on women and peace and security and had developed a strategy to increase women's participation in preventing and resolving conflicts and establishing the conditions for peace.

69. Her delegation did not endorse all the findings and recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas (A/74/224). With regard to the references in the report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the related gender action plan, it should be noted that since the Convention did not establish any specific commitments or obligations concerning gender equality, any actions taken by States parties in support of the gender action plan were voluntary. The references to the Paris Agreement and related climate change matters were without prejudice to the positions of the United States, which intended to withdraw from the Agreement at the earliest opportunity. The United States called on Member States and the international community to join it in its efforts to promote the human rights and economic empowerment of women.

70. **Ms. Al Sulaiti** (Qatar) said that, thanks to her Government's efforts to promote women's education and inclusion in the workforce, women in Qatar held leadership roles in the Government, the judiciary and the diplomatic corps, and also in the health, education, energy and technology sectors. Half of the posts at the national institute for science, education and development were occupied by women. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to promote the role of women and achieve gender parity within the United Nations system and would continue to work within the Group of Friends for Gender Parity in support of those efforts. The women and peace and security agenda was also a priority for her delegation. Qatar remained committed to participating in efforts to promote the advancement of women and enable their inclusion in all areas of life.

71. **Mr. Lam Padilla** (Guatemala) said that gender equality was enshrined in the Guatemalan Constitution. His Government was therefore committed to the advancement of women and ensuring that women and

girls were able to exercise their human rights. Gender-based discrimination was an obstacle to women's personal development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It was therefore particularly troubling that young women, indigenous women, migrant women, rural women, women with disabilities, older women, women of African descent and women living with HIV continued to face multiple forms of discrimination.

72. A lack of access to dignified work left women vulnerable to trafficking, sexual exploitation and sexual harassment in the workplace. For many, the only option was to carry out domestic labour in environments where their rights were not respected. His Government had made the empowerment and advancement of women a priority in its public policies, and special courts had been established to hear cases concerning femicide and other forms of violence against women. An office had also been established to develop and promote public policies, plans and programmes to protect indigenous women from discrimination.

73. **Ms. Bonilla Alarcón** (Guatemala) said that discrimination arising from gender stereotypes, stigmatization and gender-based violence adversely affected women's access to justice, which was essential for the full enjoyment of rights and the establishment of peaceful and inclusive societies. The participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels was necessary to ensure justice, bring about reconciliation, rebuild institutions and prevent and resolve conflicts. Her Government was working arduously to implement its national policy for the promotion and comprehensive development of women. Member States had a responsibility to give a voice to the unheard and empower the marginalized. Her delegation would continue to support the efforts of the international community to develop partnerships and initiatives that promoted the advancement of women and girls around the world without leaving anyone behind.

74. **Ms. de Martino** (Italy) said that more concerted action would be needed to achieve gender equality by 2030 and address the increasing curtailment of advancements that had been considered definitive. Her delegation had consistently spoken out against harmful traditional practices, discrimination and gender-based violence. It had supported the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and had advocated the advancement of women during its terms as a member of the Security Council. It had also pledged to promote and protect women's rights as a member of the Human Rights Council, and women's rights were a core priority of its development cooperation activities. To promote women's crucial involvement in peace and

reconciliation processes, Italy had supported the establishment of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network.

75. Men must support women in their fight to play an equal role in society. It was also important to ensure that women held positions of influence and participated equally in decision-making processes. To that end, children must be taught to value mutual respect and encouraged to adopt the cause as they grew up. More must be done to combat violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict situations. Member States should engage with civil society organizations and human rights defenders to that end and reaffirm their commitment to promote, protect and uphold the right of all individuals to have full control over their sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence.

76. **Mr. Chekeche** (Zimbabwe) said that his Government remained committed to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. Heavy investment in education had resulted in gender parity in school enrolment and one of the highest literacy rates in Africa. A commission had been established to monitor the implementation of gender-related laws and policies at the national and international levels. A law banning marriage to girls under 18 years of age had been adopted in 2016, and girls who became pregnant while in school were given the opportunity to complete their education after giving birth.

77. Thanks to his Government's land reform programme, 29 per cent of women now enjoyed full ownership rights over agricultural land, which was significant because most Zimbabwean women derived their livelihoods from agriculture. The Government had also continued to provide agricultural inputs to rural farmers in order to enhance productivity and ensure food security. However, Cyclone Idai and a severe drought had had a devastating effect on the most recent agricultural season.

78. Women's participation in agricultural and other economic activities had been boosted by the establishment in 2018 of a women's microfinance bank, which had already provided non-collateral loans to thousands of women. The Government conducted regular vulnerability surveys in order to target food relief, cash transfers and free medical care to particularly vulnerable persons and households, such as widows, persons with disabilities and households headed by girl children. Free maternity services were provided at public hospitals. His Government's multi-sectoral approach to combating gender-based

violence included health care, legal aid, shelter and economic empowerment services.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.