



General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
18 December 2019

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 14th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 October 2019, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Yaremenko (Vice-Chair)..... (Ukraine)

Contents

Agenda item 66: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Management Section (dms@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

19-17504 (E)



Please recycle A small graphic of a recycling symbol, consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



In the absence of Mr. Braun (Luxembourg), Mr. Yaremenko (Ukraine), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 66: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (continued)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (continued) (A/74/136, A/74/162, A/74/231, A/74/246, A/74/249 and A/74/259)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (continued) (A/74/240)

1. **Mr. Zavala Porras** (Costa Rica) said that improving the lives of children and adolescents had always been a priority for his country, which had created a normative and institutional framework aligned with the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments. That framework included a national action plan incorporating the principles of equality and non-discrimination and a national policy that guaranteed special protections for children and the full enjoyment of all their rights. Costa Rica continued to review its national protection system, which guaranteed comprehensive protection to minors, had adopted a law banning corporal punishment and humiliating treatment and had established a child welfare institute to ensure that minors were treated with respect and dignity. The institute encouraged preventive actions and fostered culture change through family child care and information centres. Costa Rica had also achieved substantial reductions in school dropout and exclusion rates at all levels.

2. In 2016, his Government adopted legislation on both child marriage and age of consent, issues that needed to be addressed in seeking to protect children, and especially girls, from violence. The situation of migrant children was also of great concern in Costa Rica. Instead of being detained, unaccompanied minors were placed in the temporary custody of immigration authorities and the appropriate child protection agency was notified immediately, and special protocols had been created for minors whose parents were undergoing deportation or who had become separated from them outside their countries of origin. Welcoming the progress made by the United Nations system, and in particular the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Costa Rica advocated greater international cooperation to guarantee the full enjoyment of rights by all children and adolescents and would continue to develop policies, mechanisms and services to ensure its achievement.

3. **Ms. Salim** (Afghanistan) said that her country had seen the lives of three generations of children ravaged by war, destruction and violence. Thousands of children worldwide had been killed in conflict in 2018, many of them in Afghanistan, or subjected to abuse, abduction and brainwashing by terrorists and their backers.

4. Committed to safeguarding the rights of Afghan children and protecting them from violence, her Government had adopted a child protection policy for the Ministry of Defence, created new directorates for gender and human rights, established a dedicated secretariat for children within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, amended its legislation on trafficking in persons, developed a strategy and action plan to eliminate child labour, launched an awareness-raising campaign on the Convention and its Optional Protocols and established a support hotline for child victims of human rights violations. It had also strengthened efforts to protect the rights of children whose parents were unknown by amending legislation to enable the issuance of identification cards and providing shelter to children without legal guardians. Challenges in efforts to address the plight of children in Afghanistan included high rates of children being out of school, as well as insecurity, worsening poverty, gender inequality and severe malnutrition.

5. Through its implementation of a joint action plan signed in 2011 with the United Nations, Afghanistan had prevented the recruitment of child soldiers and enabled the reintegration of delinquent juveniles by providing opportunities for constructive contributions to society. Her Government's commitment to supporting and enhancing the rights of children reflected the genuine aspirations of Afghan children for a peaceful future to ensure the preservation and protection of their rights.

6. **Ms. Bakytbekkyzy** (Kazakhstan) said that, 30 years after its adoption, ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was nearly universal. The commitments made, however, needed to be renewed and translated into concrete action to promote the effective enjoyment of rights by every child. The best way to leave no child behind was to ensure that no child would grow up in a world of fear, violence and hopelessness. Her Government had therefore undertaken an innovative operation, supported by close international cooperation, to bring home the 595 Kazakh citizens who had been become involved in the activities of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), including more than 400 children, and provide them with rehabilitation and reintegration services. The children had been reunited with relatives and now went to school, and many women returnees had secured jobs and were currently assisting in awareness-raising campaigns to prevent further recruitment.

7. Since signing the Convention in 1994, Kazakhstan had financed psychosocial support services for children, adolescents and parents affected by HIV in the country, supported by UNICEF, and had established a dedicated ombudsman's office to protect the rights of children and reclaim those that had been violated. Kazakhstan had significantly reduced infant mortality rates since 2008, exceeding the Millennium Development Goal targets, and was now striving to reach those of the Sustainable Development Goals. Children in Kazakhstan also benefited from new minimum standards for targeted social support in rural areas and vulnerable populations, with high priority given to mother and child health and well-being, through expanded primary health care nationwide and an emphasis on medical education, physical training and sports. A shift from institutional care to smaller units and community-based services provided better opportunities for the development of children with disabilities. Measures taken to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as child labour and trafficking, included stricter legislation and controls pertaining to information and communications technology. Kazakhstan aimed to continue its international cooperation to ensure the realization of children's rights worldwide, in order to achieve global peaceful development and coexistence.

8. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that, as a signatory of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the State of Palestine appealed to the international community not to forget Palestinian children, who suffered greatly owing to the decades-long occupation by Israel, which continued to carry out grave breaches of international law with impunity. Such breaches included the killing and maiming of Palestinian children by Israeli occupying forces; the continued rise in the number of child casualties in 2019, including as a result of intentional targeting of peaceful protesters; ongoing settler violence and terror, including harassment and attacks on schoolchildren; and Israeli raids on schools and closures of educational institutions in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with more than half of United Nations-verified education-related violations involving violence by Israeli forces. It was the collective duty of the international community to protect every child, everywhere, and to safeguard their right to access quality education; Palestinian children should not be the exception.

9. The illegal colonization of Palestinian land also continued to gravely affect children, through the systematic and punitive demolition of homes that had forcibly displaced hundreds of children and their

families. Palestinian children continued to be arrested, brutally interrogated, detained and imprisoned, with some held for up to a year without charge. The Israeli military detention system was notorious for its systematic ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children, with reports documenting physical violence during arrest, transfer or interrogation, leading to physical and psychological trauma. In the Gaza Strip, 1 million children and adolescents continued to suffer deprivation and isolation as a result of the blockade, now in its thirteenth year, having been denied the most basic rights and necessities, including clean drinking water. The average 12-year old child had witnessed three wars and effectively lived in an open-air prison. The international community must act immediately, and without selectivity, to protect the lives of Palestinian children under Israeli occupation.

10. **Ms. Pierre Fabre** (Haiti) said that States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child were obliged, not only to protect children, but to guarantee their right to education, care, freedom of expression and enjoyment of life and to make every effort to promote their survival and development. As a party to the Convention and two of its Optional Protocols, Haiti was pleased to note that most of the complexities involved in the issue of children's rights were being addressed under the agenda item, including, in particular, by shedding light on efforts by developing States, supported by international commitments and national legislation, to improve the lives of girls.

11. Measures taken by her Government to strengthen the legal framework to protect the rights of children included the adoption of legislation to ban all forms of abuse, violence and ill-treatment or inhuman treatment of children; the ratification of the conventions on the worst forms of child labour and on the minimum age for employment of the International Labour Organization (ILO); the adoption of legislation governing paternity, maternity and responsible parenthood; the ratification of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption; and the reform of adoption legislation in Haiti. In order to ensure the implementation of that national framework in line with international agreements, her Government had created a national police brigade for the protection of minors; a child protection branch of the citizen's protection office; an interministerial committee spearheaded by the minister responsible for human rights and poverty reduction; and various issues tables and working groups to address and coordinate child protection activities.

12. **Ms. Cartwright** (Bahamas) said that her country welcomed the opportunity to engage with the special

procedure mandate holders, experts and United Nations officials. Her Government had a dedicated working committee, consisting of representatives of key ministries, agencies and other stakeholders, that met regularly to update information on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was buttressed by a strong institutional and legislative framework. The latter included the implementation of a nationwide partnership between law enforcement agencies, broadcast and social media, the corporate sector and the general public to find missing children, joining other countries with similar alert systems. Additional measures included initiatives and workshops to curb youth unemployment through educational and job opportunities; programmes for skills-building, training, mentoring and business start-up; opportunities for free university or technical studies, grants for studies abroad and educational loans; a virtual school initiative providing access for students in more remote areas to teachers who could not be physically present; and the observation of a National Youth Month to showcase the talents of young people and ensure that their voices were heard.

13. In response to the trauma experienced by children in the wake of Hurricane Dorian, and supported by UNICEF, her Government had registered approximately 10,000 displaced students, with a view to enrolling them back in school as soon as possible. It would also be upgrading the skills of school counsellors, teachers and social workers nationwide to deliver psychosocial support and recreational activities to students and children displaced or otherwise affected by the hurricane, to ensure that no child would be at risk of dropping out of school because of it. The Bahamas was grateful to all States, entities and organizations that provided help and support during its time of greatest need.

14. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was an appropriate opportunity to assess the progress made both nationally and internationally in promoting and protecting the rights of children. Social development initiatives launched by Egypt in the past year had led to a decrease in school dropout rates and improvements in child physical and mental health. Awareness campaigns had also been launched, aimed at both children and caregivers, on such topics as bullying, social media and Internet security and the impact of physical and psychological violence against children.

15. In observance of its national year of education, Egypt had adopted a comprehensive national strategy to improve the pre-university education system starting

from early childhood, including capacity-building for teachers, improved teaching methods and the use of modern technologies and upgraded assessment and monitoring systems. The Government also provided education to refugee children, who enjoyed same rights to education and health as citizens. Egypt was committed to implementing the provisions of the Convention and all other international instruments on children ratified by its Government, including respect for the cultural identity and language rights of the parents, as the family was the best forum for fostering the physical and psychological development of the child.

16. **Mr. Mohd Nasir** (Malaysia) said that his country was committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, to secure their future. His Government had enacted legislation addressing the core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, respect for the views of the child and the right to life, survival and development. That legislation had subsequently been amended to further improve the protection of children's rights. Specific legislation had also been enacted to address sexual crimes against children and establish a special court for such crimes – the first of its kind in Southeast Asia.

17. Malaysia had established child activity centres to provide social support services for families; introduced helplines for child-related complaints; developed a community-based rehabilitation, equalization and social integration strategy for persons with disabilities, including children; and had introduced multiple subcategories for assessing learning disabilities to ensure that children with such disabilities were not left behind, as well as a special education policy to ensure that no special needs child was turned away from national schools. In addition, a dedicated commissioner had been appointed to monitor the implementation of child protection legislation. Malaysia had also piloted a programme to divert children in conflict with the law away from the criminal justice system, as well as an initiative to create safe and inclusive cities for children.

18. Malaysia had recently held a national consultation to involve relevant stakeholders, including civil society, in the midterm review of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children. His Government would continue to work closely with international organizations such as UNICEF in further promoting and protecting children's rights and stood ready to exchange best practices with other relevant partners in safeguarding those rights.

19. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that since its independence, her country had devoted most of its budget to education, guaranteeing access to free and compulsory education for every child living in Algeria, regardless of nationality, status or gender, including refugees in both cities and camps. That budget had increased greatly in recent years, with new programmes and action plans to meet evolving challenges.

20. While Sustainable Development Goal 4 provided a framework for protecting children's right to quality education and thus promoting their well-being, global peace and security was a prerequisite for its achievement; children should be a consideration in all the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Her Government had therefore taken a comprehensive socioeconomic and political approach to reform that included the participation of civil society, with schools occupying an important position in the promotion of quality, modernity and national identity. The targets of such policies included widespread access, in particular with regard to quality of knowledge, improved efficiency and effectiveness of the education system and the protection of the fundamental rights of children. International human rights and humanitarian law placed special importance on the protection of children, who comprised the most vulnerable group in any society. Algeria had acceded to the majority of human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had adopted legislation with a view to ending all forms of violence against children, defining rules related to child offenders and establishing mechanisms to protect children at risk, including within specialized centres.

21. To create a peaceful world for all children without fear of violence, measures must be taken by the international community to protect children in situations of armed conflict through joint action and effective long-term strategies for conflict prevention and resolution. The United Nations had a key role to play in supporting the efforts of Member States in combating child recruitment during armed conflicts and in providing assistance with post-conflict social and family reintegration.

22. **Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that Governments still struggled to secure an enabling environment around the world that was fit for children, who faced as many challenges as their parents had three decades earlier. In spite of steps taken to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1 billion children still faced one or more forms of violence, while millions had lived their entire lives under armed conflict and foreign occupation. Left unattended, the broad violation of their basic human

rights would serve as a breeding ground for the further propagation of extremism and violence.

23. It was also alarming that one third of humanity lived in countries targeted by unilateral coercive measures or inhumane blockades. Iranian children were the primary victims of a genocidal economic war unleashed through such measures, which indiscriminately targeted the most vulnerable, including those in need of vital medical attention, for political gain. Given the ramifications, it seemed incumbent upon the United Nations to consider the situation more seriously and in greater depth.

24. Despite an unfair and unconducive external environment lasting four decades, his Government had made significant progress to improve the living conditions of children. Initiatives included the establishment of specialized clinics following the declaration of 2019 as the year of reform in the rights of the child; a legislative amendment granting citizenship to children born to Iranian mothers married to foreign spouses, in an effort to end child statelessness; the production of a national document on decent work that included strategies to eliminate child labour; the establishment of guidelines on the preservation of human dignity containing provisions on child rights; and the adoption of a bill that included provisions aimed at ending violence against children and adolescents. With access to health-care services and quality education for children viewed as pillars of national development, the Islamic Republic of Iran had achieved internationally agreed targets on child and maternal mortality, the gender gap in education had been nearly eliminated and thousands of refugee children were attending school, regardless of their status.

25. **Mr. Moussa** (Djibouti) said that violence and conflict continued to destroy the lives of children and young people, seriously undermining their rights through dehumanization and impunity. On the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, and five years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, it was necessary to renew the commitments made through hard work and by refocusing efforts on the best interests, growth and well-being of every child.

26. Djibouti welcomed achievements in prevention, in strengthened health care and in humanitarian assistance to children in conflict situations, as well as the implementation of national and international legal frameworks and the large United Nations and non-governmental presence on the ground. Nevertheless, more needed to be done to ensure that all areas were

fully addressed, with particular importance given to the empowerment of girls in rural areas. His Government had taken several measures to protect children and foster early childhood development, including free medical care and counselling to families of children with special needs.

27. Heartened by the global youth-led mass protest movement against climate change, which constituted a serious threat to the health and well-being of children and young people, with catastrophic consequences in particular in the Horn of Africa, Djibouti was also encouraged by the visible support given to young people in expressing their concerns, in their own words, at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. His own Government had established a youth parliament to familiarize young people with parliamentary procedures through simulated meetings and debate.

28. **Ms. Donatirin** (Indonesia) said that, despite remarkable breakthroughs, many children remained trapped in vicious cycles of poverty and violence, including through infant mortality, lack of access to education and victimization by exploitation, cybercrime and armed conflict. Indonesia had adopted numerous measures to promote children's rights to life, survival and development for children, free from violence, abuse and sexual exploitation.

29. Efforts to ensure primary health care for children, from pregnancy to childbirth and beyond, included the promotion of vaccinations, proper nutrition and a clean and sanitary environment. As a pathfinder country in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, Indonesia supported the voluntary global pledge, "For every child, every right" and had put in place a policy for safe and secure schools to ensure that child-friendly standards for learning, teacher training, facilities and family participation were met, with periodic monitoring to assess violations, including corporal punishment. Furthermore, legislation on child protection and a national action plan on human rights provided a framework for addressing children's rights as victims in armed conflict, in particular by reuniting children formerly associated with armed groups with their families or caregivers and by acquiring the tools to rebuild their lives.

30. Indonesia was developing family-friendly policies on access to health, basic education and economic empowerment and would continue to support synergies between the realization of children's rights and the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

31. **Ms. Chew** (Singapore) said that every child deserved to grow up in a safe and loving environment,

where they would be nurtured and empowered to reach their full potential. As a small city State with no natural resources except its people, Singapore appreciated the need to provide all children with the opportunities to develop the skills they needed to support lifelong learning. Good quality early childhood education was crucial to the necessary physical, cognitive and social development that provided a solid foundation for life. The Government had therefore established a specialized agency to oversee key aspects of development in children below the 7 years of age and had upgraded preschools, doubling their capacities and improving teacher training. It had also provided subsidies to ensure affordability for all families. As a result, nearly all children in Singapore completed primary and secondary education, and more than three quarters completed tertiary education. In addition, infant mortality rates were extremely low and vaccination rates high, as was life expectancy.

32. Singapore had also recently changed the legal definition of a young person to cover individuals below the age of 18 years, in line with the Convention, to allow for interventions in instances where the safety of older children might be compromised. Other legislative changes would enable the Government to better intervene in cases of emotional harm, empower caregivers to authorize the provision of services and extend childcare leave benefits to foster parents, in line with global trends to protect children without parental care.

33. Nevertheless, more needed to be done by the international community to improve prospects for children worldwide, to protect and promote their well-being and to enable them to grow up in a safe and conducive environment, so as to provide every child, regardless of background, with the best possible chance to shape a better future for everyone.

34. **Mr. Zambrano Ortiz** (Ecuador), noting that children had been recognized as a group requiring priority attention under his country's Constitution, said that States were responsible for protecting them against all forms of violence, ill-treatment and sexual exploitation and for ensuring the protection of their rights. Ecuador had therefore implemented various initiatives, including a programme to promote equality through joint responsibility for early childhood care, aimed at providing children, as the present and future of communities, with the best opportunities and environments for safe and secure development.

35. In honour of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the nineteenth of its Optional Protocol on the involvement

of children in armed conflict, Ecuador encouraged the universal ratification of the latter and reiterated its commitment to strengthening the enjoyment of rights by all children, everywhere. Stronger efforts must be made to support States in ending all preventable deaths of children under 5 years of age by 2030 and to protect the rights of children living in conflict zones and prevent their continued recruitment and use in armed conflict worldwide. Reaffirming his Government's pledge to leave no one behind as it strove to achieve sustainable development and implement the 2030 Agenda, his delegation stressed the need to strengthen productive dialogue, with the protection and promotion of the rights of the child as a priority, as it was only by doing so that States could achieve Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16.

36. **Mr. Amayo** (Kenya) said that, despite significant improvements made by the international community in reducing child mortality and increasing access to education, millions of children still faced challenges that threatened their rights, security and well-being and hampered the realization of their full potential. Enhanced global efforts were therefore required to address those disparities.

37. Recognizing children, not only as beneficiaries, but as agents of change central to the realization of the 2030 Agenda, Kenya had integrated the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals into its constitutional, legislative and policy frameworks as part of its efforts to ensure a caring and loving environment for every child.

38. Achievements in education included gender parity and substantial progress in promoting inclusion. Maternal, infant and child mortality rates had been reduced. Child protection and community resource centres had been established to provide essential services to victims of abuse and information on child protection measures, respectively. An information system had been created to facilitate the assessment of child protection services and coordinate and supervise stakeholders through child-focused data. Legislation had been adopted criminalizing the sexual exploitation of children, and a national plan of action developed to combat trafficking in humans, including children. Cash transfer programmes and a bursary scheme for education eased the burden on disadvantaged children. Kenya had also made sustained efforts to eliminate harmful cultural practices and was committed to the eradication of female genital mutilation by 2022.

39. It was incumbent upon world leaders to garner the necessary resources and efforts to end all violations of children's rights and fulfil the hope, vision and commitment that had led to the adoption of the Convention in 1989.

40. **Ms. Vives Balmaña** (Andorra) said that, thanks to progress made under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, combined with the Sustainable Development Goals, and efforts made to achieve a world fit for children and empowered societies capable of handling contemporary challenges, no girl or boy would be left behind. The situations outlined in the global study on children deprived of liberty ([A/74/136](#)), the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict ([A/74/249](#)) and the annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children ([A/74/259](#)), however, required strategic approaches capable of meeting the needs of children still living under extremely difficult conditions.

41. As a party to the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers and the Safe Schools Declaration, as well as a regular contributor to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Andorra welcomed the signing of agreements between parties in conflict and the programme jointly established by many Member States to reintegrate any children involved. As education and the eradication of violence were key to achieving social change and greater hope for the future, Andorra also welcomed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General the girl child ([A/74/246](#)) on how to empower girls and achieve optimal conditions for their development through quality and inclusive education.

42. Progress made to date included steps taken to end female genital mutilation and child marriage and efforts to reduce school bullying and counter the use of technology to commit violence. Andorra provided specific services to meet the needs of children and adolescents, including with regard to quality education. Her Government had also passed legislation creating measures to protect the rights of children and adolescents, with consideration for their best interests and a particular focus on abuse and exclusion, and had established a budget to support their health, well-being, education and inclusion, including for those with special needs and disabilities. Andorra also conducted a wide variety of child rights-oriented awareness-raising initiatives jointly with UNICEF and would continue to

assist in facing the challenges involved in protecting children's rights.

43. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that the constitutional declaration adopted by her country in August 2019 contained an obligation for her Government to respect the rights of children under international and regional conventions and protected children from all psychological and physical mistreatment or abuse. Efforts to meet those obligations included the creation of institutions and policies to protect and guarantee the rights of children, in particular in conflict-affected areas, including within the armed and police forces at both the federal and provincial levels, as well as social development centres to protect children, promote the empowerment of women and combat poverty. Social protection networks had also been created and non-governmental organizations established to protect children and raise awareness about their rights.

44. The Sudan, jointly with the United Nations, had completed a work programme aimed at protecting children's rights, which had led to its removal from the list of child rights violators. Her Government was currently carrying out its plan of action, following visits by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and a technical committee to gather information on the situation of children in the Sudan and provide support for policy implementation. The plan also promoted the sharing of knowledge to foster regional cooperation, which was required to counter the impact of children's involvement in armed conflict. Additional important measures included the recording of birthdates at registration centres, the consideration of customs and traditions in initiatives carried out in conflict zones and awareness-raising campaigns addressing the impact of violence against children. The Sudan reiterated its commitment to respecting all international standards and conventions on the issue and to continuing to cooperate with the Office of the Special Representative, the United Nations country team and UNICEF in that regard.

45. **Ms. Chidiac** (Lebanon) said that the parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child had come together 30 years earlier to promise a life of dignity and well-being to every child. Despite progress made on many fronts, however, millions of children worldwide still suffered from extreme poverty, violence, sexual exploitation and slavery, harmful practices, discrimination and neglect. Nevertheless, that broken promise could still be corrected, and present-day children could still grow up to be tomorrow's peacemakers.

46. While the reports submitted before the Committee were sobering, they also provided a road map on how to

build a world fit for children. Faced with persistent high levels of grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, it was incumbent upon everyone to comply with international humanitarian law and international conventions to protect the best interests of children, even under extremely dire circumstances. Furthermore, civil society, children's rights defenders and activists were essential partners in efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

47. Given that providing free education to all children was a cornerstone in creating a safe environment for children, her Government had recently adopted changes to its legislation, allowing 150,000 non-Lebanese children to attend public schools. The efforts of UNICEF Lebanon remained essential in driving national child protection policies, which included a programme to address and eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

48. **Ms. Elmarmuri** (Libya) said that the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly entitled "A World Fit for Children", adopted 17 years earlier, contained a set of objectives aimed at providing children and young people with a healthy life and protecting them from the challenges they faced. While improvements in the field were heartening, disparities in those improvements were discouraging. Efforts needed to be focused on addressing challenges related to education and health, in particular in situations of armed conflict, and to promoting the work of United Nations agencies in that regard. Children in poor countries were especially vulnerable and at risk of becoming victims of trafficking and exploitation. It was therefore important for the international community to address the significant decrease in official development assistance allocated to children. The promotion of education and the use of digital techniques to prepare for the jobs of the future was also important.

49. Despite the difficulties in Libya, her Government was committed to implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child through national legislation. That included providing free education and health and social services to protect children from violence, and implementing a national plan of action to protect the rights of children at all levels and meet humanitarian needs, in particular in areas affected by armed conflict and instability. Financial and technical support was required for the plan, however. Ensuring the happiness and well-being of children worldwide required serious and effective cooperation by the international community.

50. **Ms. Abraham** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child provided the

overarching strategic framework for her country's efforts to protect the rights of children, with several provisions incorporated into its national legislation. On that basis, her Government had developed a draft national policy for the care, protection and development of all children, which offered guidance to support legislation, interventions and infrastructure to further ensure their rights.

51. As it was important to focus on the interests of children as a distinct social group and to recognize their capacities and developmental needs and their roles as active social agents, the promotion and protection of their rights and well-being were values embedded in the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago and implemented through advancements in legislation and the establishment of child-centred services. Additional initiatives included collaboration with UNICEF on a second child rights ambassador programme aimed at providing a platform for children to speak out on issues affecting them, educate their peers and foster social participation; broadcast and social media campaigns on child labour issues, in collaboration with ILO; awareness initiatives on strategies to prevent and reduce child abuse; and workshops, communication strategies, advocacy efforts and information fairs to educate adults and children on the Convention itself.

52. Trinidad and Tobago looked forward to continuing its collaboration with the United Nations agencies and the international community to further strengthen national policies and legislation to ensure a future where no child was left behind.

53. **Mr. Rumongi** (Rwanda) said that his Government had made significant investments in the key social, economic and political factors outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the girl child ([A/74/246](#)) to empower girls to achieve their full potential. Interventions to address high dropout rates among girls in rural areas included merit and need-based scholarships, mentorship programmes and proper hygiene facilities. As a HeForShe Campaign champion, Rwanda also aimed to triple the enrolment of girls in technical and vocational education and training and to combat gender-based violence.

54. The intensification and evolution of combat situations, conflict dynamics and operational tactics, combined with widespread disregard for international humanitarian law and underpinned by poverty-related vulnerability leading to their recruitment and use in conflict situations, had had devastating effects on children. Security, development, human rights and humanitarian issues required complementary, sustainable and comprehensive strategies to address those effects.

While the achievements of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant United Nations agencies to alleviate the situation were commendable, the issue of the exploitation of children still needed to be resolved.

55. Rwanda had developed decentralized structures to ensure the protection of children, including child protection units within law enforcement agencies; community awareness-raising projects to prevent child abuse; effective and timely legal processes to identify and deal with offenders; and grass-roots services to address the gender dimension. Rwanda was committed to ensuring that its children were fully empowered, protected and prepared for the future as active contributors to its development and prosperity.

56. **Mr. Balobaid** (Yemen) said that the many measures taken by his Government to protect and promote the rights of children included the ratification of the Optional Protocol on their involvement in armed conflict, the establishment of an action plan to end their recruitment and exploitation by armed militias, the signing of the Safe Schools Declaration, the implementation of a special protocol for the handover of children arrested for participation in armed conflict and the joining of a coalition for their reintegration into society. Children belonged in school and with their families, not on the front lines or in minefields.

57. Working with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, his Government had established a road map and a technical committee for the implementation of the action plan. Owing to delays in implementation, his delegation requested assistance from the country team and called for training and support to build the capacities of the technical team. His Government looked forward to a visit by the Special Representative to view efforts already made, which included the handover of 50 children to the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNICEF, to be reunited with their families after undergoing rehabilitation. His delegation called upon the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers for further support.

58. In response to the report of the Special Representative ([A/74/249](#)), his delegation categorically denied the presence of any children in the Yemeni armed forces and stressed the need to update the monitoring mechanism and the locations of monitoring groups to cover areas controlled by armed Houthi militias, which had established summer camps to train children for the front lines. His delegation welcomed cooperation with the Office of Special Representative and the Arab

coalition forces, as well as all United Nations efforts to end the phenomenon of child soldiers, and reaffirmed the need for full cooperation with his Government to implement the plan of action and the road map throughout Yemen.

59. **Mr. Moscoso** (Panama) said that, to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, his Government had renewed its commitment to children through the voluntary global pledge “For every child, every right” and would safeguard their interests against the new challenges posed by climate change, migration and conflict. In the past three decades, Panama had made significant progress in creating the institutional change necessary to implement the Convention and its Optional Protocols, to which it was a full party. His delegation welcomed the achievements outlined by the Secretary-General in his reports and made possible through multilateral cooperation mechanisms, but warned that children’s most fundamental rights continued to be violated by the effects of inequality, poverty, malnutrition and insecurity.

60. In an increasingly challenging and competitive world, ensuring the comprehensive and holistic social, physical and cognitive development of children through quality education was key to achieving a more responsible and healthy society. Children were the number one priority of his Government, which had revitalized early childhood care centres in high-risk areas and vulnerable communities and had initiated public-private partnerships to maximize financing and participation in the field, to ensure that no one would be left behind in State efforts to guarantee human rights.

61. Panama was a pioneer in efforts to eliminate the institutionalization of children without parental care by keeping children in family environments rather than shelters and by establishing programmes to strengthen families. In line with collaborative multilateral efforts and instruments, children should not be separated from their families except to protect them from violence, neglect and abuse. National institutions needed to be strengthened through comprehensive policies to protect children’s rights and foster sustainable social development.

62. **Mr. Alsuwaidi** (United Arab Emirates) said that family stability played a major role in the psychological and social stability of the child. Children would one day be future leaders. Children’s rights had been entrenched in the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates, and his Government had enacted laws to provide them with special care and social services, protect them from violence, neglect and abuse and ensure their right to life,

survival and development. At the international level, his Government had made sizeable donations, including to UNICEF, as development assistance for the protection of children’s rights worldwide.

63. His Government had adopted a policy to ensure that women and girls in crisis situations benefited from all humanitarian projects and programmes. Centres had been established to help abused children and ensure their psychological well-being, and capacity-building initiatives had been created to address new challenges such as bullying, including measures to combat online threats. The United Arab Emirates had hosted a global forum of the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities on protecting the dignity of children in the digital world, with participation by relevant United Nations representatives and some 450 community and religious leaders, culminating in a declaration aimed at protecting children against online sexual exploitation and abuse. The United Arab Emirates would celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by reaffirming its commitment to work with partners in the international community to improve national policies and services with a view to implementing the 2030 Agenda and building a world fit for children.

64. **Mr. Hong Jin Um** (Republic of Korea) said that promoting and protecting the rights of the child was essential for the sustainable development of the international community. While remarkable progress had been achieved in many areas in the past 30 years, there was still considerable room for improvement. It was vital that children be recognized as agents in addressing their rights, rather than as mere subjects to be protected, managed and nurtured by adults. The older generation needed to pay attention to the solutions presented by children and to their points of view.

65. As Co-Chair, together with Qatar, of the Group of Friends on Global Citizenship Education, the Republic of Korea had hosted many events to help to raise awareness of the need for transformative education through the nurturing of shared values and respect for diversity. His Government had also established a comprehensive plan aimed at strengthening its child-oriented policies and programmes for building an inclusive society. It was necessary to take a dynamic and holistic approach to addressing children’s rights in the increasingly vulnerable situations that stemmed from emerging digital technologies, military conflicts and climate change and were exacerbated by gender- and disability-based social discrimination. At a commemorative event held in September, the UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Muzoon Almellehan, had shared her experiences as a Syrian child refugee, providing insight into the complexity of the challenges ahead and

the need for just such an approach. In that regard, the Republic of Korea supported projects and initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations, preventing sexual violence and enhancing the capacities of communities.

66. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his country retained an unwavering commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of children. As one of the first countries to ratify many United Nations and other international instruments on child rights, Bangladesh had put in place national legislation and policies to fulfil those obligations to address all forms of child abuse and uphold the rights of all children, including those with disabilities, by providing education and health care to ensure that no one was left behind.

67. Having achieved gender parity and full enrolment in schools, Bangladesh was now focusing on enhancing the quality of education and lowering the dropout rate, including through an emphasis on e-learning and better qualified teachers, the distribution of free textbooks and scholarships, skills development and improved infrastructure and sanitation. Significant improvements in child health in the past decade had been made possible through the adoption of a more holistic and sector-wide approach, starting from birth, which included high immunization rates and the creation of an extensive network of community clinics and health centres providing free medicine and primary health services to rural populations, leading to continual reductions in maternal, infant and child mortality, malnutrition and stunting.

68. His delegation urged the international community to complement the efforts of developing countries by providing technical and financial assistance to meet children's needs. With such support, his Government was currently addressing the health-care, educational and other welfare needs of more than 1 million Rohingya refugees living in camps in Bangladesh, 60 per cent of whom were reportedly children. The main objective was to help those children to realize their full potential through their safe, secure, voluntary and sustained return to Myanmar. The thirtieth anniversary of Convention must be used to exemplify and act on the collective commitment to promote and protect rights of children worldwide.

69. **Ms. Zhu Huilan** (China) said that over the past three decades, guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international community and national Governments had made steady progress in protecting the rights of children worldwide. Despite significant achievements, however, the lives and health of children continued to be threatened in many places. It was

necessary to work towards the lasting peaceful settlement of international disputes, supported by sustainable development, to protect children from the scourge of war and turmoil. Her Government called on all countries to strengthen cooperation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Developed countries needed to shoulder more responsibilities, through financial and technical assistance to developing countries, so as to jointly create a sound environment for the healthy development of all children.

70. Her Government had adopted legislation to the protect the rights and interests of minors in China and had established development programmes to strengthen those protections. Infant mortality rates had fallen and a nutrition improvement programme for children in poor areas had benefited more than 7 million children around the country. Her Government had also imposed strong penalties for child sexual abuse and trafficking in minors and had instituted a ban on the hiring of sexual offenders in certain sectors, the mandatory reporting of sexual assault on campus and initiatives to combat school violence and bullying. Additional measures were aimed at strengthening the primary responsibility of parents or guardians and aggressively combating crimes against children at risk in rural areas.

71. Making full use of advanced technological means to rescue child victims of trafficking, China had established a DNA database to combat abduction and an emergency information dissemination platform for missing children. Her Government had also issued regulations to protect personal information online, prohibiting the production or dissemination of information that could infringe upon child safety. As a State party to the Convention and two of its Optional Protocols, China had always fulfilled its obligations thereunder, actively engaged in dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of the Child and would continue to fulfil its international responsibilities to protect and promote the rights of the child worldwide.

72. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that, despite the near-universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the pivotal focus on the prevention of violence against children in the 2030 Agenda and the substantial efforts made and progress achieved in promoting respect for the rights of children, millions of children worldwide continued to suffer. New strategies and concrete actions were therefore required to ensure their well-being.

73. Measures taken by Burundi, as a State party to the Convention and two of its Optional Protocols, to establish a favourable and conducive environment for children included a national committee for child

protection and a multisectoral committee to address child labour; a specialized police unit for the protection of minors, as well as separate courts, special detention conditions and re-education centres for minors in conflict with the law, to foster a more positive and multidisciplinary approach to justice that incorporated both prevention and reintegration; a national forum for children's issues; a policy to protect at-risk children, a strategy to foster the reintegration of street children and a cash transfer programme to help poor families in at-risk areas; and a school canteen programme aimed at lowering dropout rates while stimulating local farm production and injecting cash into the community.

74. His delegation was grateful to UNICEF and other United Nations agencies and partners for their work in helping to protect and promote the rights of children in Burundi, which had led to gender parity in schools and lower dropout rates; free health services for pregnant women and children under 5 years of age; and a 95 per cent child vaccination rate. Burundi reaffirmed its commitment to respecting all international, regional and national instruments on the protection of child rights.

75. **Ms. Namgyel** (Bhutan) said that 13 per cent of the world's population still lived below the international poverty line, with children making up nearly half of that demographic. As recognized in Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 4, it was necessary provide the next generation with the tools to fight poverty and prevent disease, through inclusive and equitable quality education.

76. As a small country, Bhutan prioritized education as a basis for the realization of other rights and goals, including full employment and poverty eradication, and had already achieved near-universal primary-level enrolment and almost 90 per cent secondary-level enrolment. Quality education and skills, including in early childhood care and development and in technical and vocational training, formed a key target in her Government's development plan. Progressive child protection measures included legislation on childcare, adoption and domestic violence prevention, as well as standard operating procedures for the implementation of those laws. A national action plan was been implemented to provide a protective environment for children, and a policy was being developed to support child well-being and protection systems nationwide.

77. Despite the progress achieved, her Government acknowledged that it could and must do more. Further improvements included the establishment of a multidisciplinary social services workforce trained in child protection and the implementation of legal provisions; a toll-free helpline for women and children

in difficult circumstances; and case management committees to enable timely and effective access to prevention, response and reintegration services.

78. In the almost 30 years since its accession to the Convention, Bhutan had endeavoured to provide an environment in which children were able to live in peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. It remained committed to enabling children to realize their full potential and to ensuring that no child was left behind.

79. **Ms. Alfuhaid** (Kuwait) said that, as the most widely-ratified human rights instrument, the Convention on the Rights of the Child represented the commitment made by the international community to protect those rights. Kuwait welcomed reports that more than 100 States had taken measures in that regard, as well as the progress made in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. It also supported the high-level political forum on sustainable development, held in June 2019, where efforts to protect human rights had been reviewed. Nevertheless, a gap remained between human rights commitments and their implementation, in particular with regard to children, who were often deprived of liberty and education and faced violence and poverty.

80. Strengthened cooperation and the exchange of best practices were needed to prevent violence and find peaceful and political solutions to conflict, in particular in the Arab world. Faced with the reality of ongoing conflict, however, the international community was urged to provide protection for all people, in particular children, and to ensure safe and barrier-free humanitarian aid. Kuwait was one of largest donors in the Middle East and North Africa region, having transferred more than \$230 million to conflict-affected countries since 2010.

81. Given that the family was the natural environment for fostering children's well-being, the Constitution of Kuwait contained provisions to ensure a safe family environment and the protection of children's rights to education, health and freedom from violence. As seen at the start of the current session of the General Assembly, children now played a fundamental role in ensuring a better future. Kuwait would continue to support all intergovernmental efforts to protect children and their dignity in an effort to create a world worthy of children.

82. **Mr. Gumende** (Mozambique) said that children represented some 55 per cent of his country's total population, and their protection and well-being were national priorities enshrined in its Constitution. His Government's current five-year plan outlined a set of strategic actions aimed at improving the lives of

children, in particular with regard to health, nutrition, education, protection and participation. Mozambique had adopted legislation to protect families and prevent and combat trafficking in persons, in particular women and children. His Government had also undertaken actions to mainstream the rights of the child in school curricula; train civil servants and other stakeholders on the protection of those rights; and provide access to accurate, child-appropriate and up-to-date information on sexual and reproductive health to young people and their family members, through the use of information and communications technology and social networks.

83. Legislation had also been adopted to criminalize child marriage and define the role of government institutions in preventing the practice, and a national strategy had been adopted to set out the priorities of all public, private and civil society actors involved in combating it. The implementation of that framework had led to the sensitization of relevant stakeholders; the training and mentoring of more than 2,000 girls; and the creation of local school councils to raise awareness among girls and create conducive environments free of early marriage. Mozambique was actively engaged in the implementation of the Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage, a Southern African Development Community instrument for coordinating action at the regional level. Mozambique had also implemented the Spotlight Initiative, the aim of which was to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful practices. Mozambique would continue to take steps to end the practice, including through the implementation of national strategies and international instruments.

84. **Mr. Panayotov** (Bulgaria) said that his country welcomed all efforts aimed at the protection and promotion of the rights of children worldwide, in particular those with disabilities and those deprived of parental care. As a co-facilitator, together with Pakistan, of modalities for the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had played a global role in scaling up progress on child protection, and as one of three Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends for Children and Sustainable Development Goals, Bulgaria was determined to raise the visibility of children by endorsing the voluntary global pledge “For every child, every right”, thereby demonstrating its commitment to pursuing the Goals in line with the principles enshrined in the Convention, and called on all Member States to do the same.

85. His Government had adopted a series of national laws reinforcing the individual, human rights-based approach to children, as well as guidelines for

alternative care over institutionalization, which had resulted in a 90 per cent increase in the number of children deprived of parental care remaining within a family and a growth in child-oriented social services. Bulgaria was also committed to ensuring equal and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all, in particular to provide opportunities for meaningful social participation to children, young people and persons with disabilities. His Government would continue to promote deinstitutionalization and inclusive education at the national, regional and international levels, including through official development assistance to other countries.

86. In order to ensure the meaningful participation of children as agents of change in political processes and decision-making, his Government had also launched a youth delegate programme, which enabled young people to join the official delegation of Bulgaria to the United Nations and serve as a bridge between Bulgarian youth and national and international institutions.

87. **Ms. Moldoisaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the harmonious development of children remained a priority for her country, which had already reduced child mortality by more than two thirds and had greatly increased the participation rate in preschool education programmes. The legal framework for the protection of children’s rights included special constitutional guarantees in favour of families and children, including numerous anti-discrimination provisions, and the adoption in 2006 of the Kyrgyz Republic Code on Children, incorporating the norms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child into national legislation. Requirements under the code included the establishment of quality standards in the field of child services, a child ombudsman system and a government agency responsible for implementing the provisions of the code.

88. In order to increase social protections, raise the coverage and quality of education and health care and combat violence against children, Kyrgyzstan had established a national development strategy to promote human development, consider the well-being of all and realize their full potential. Implementing that strategy involved improved quality of health and medical care; full and guaranteed access to education; and guaranteed minimum social support and protection standards for children.

89. The priority for Kyrgyzstan remained early childhood development, protecting the rights and interest of children and achieving the child-oriented Sustainable Development Goals to ensure a strong and

happy family environment for all children. Creating conducive conditions to achieve those Goals was not only the duty of the parents, but also that of the State, local authorities and civil society.

90. **Ms. Mijić** (Croatia) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child played a central role in improving the lives of children around the world, with the special procedure mandate holders an indispensable part of that structure. Despite the progress achieved, there remained plenty of work ahead to increase the understanding and realization of children's rights worldwide.

91. Just a few days earlier, Croatia had put forth its first budget dedicated to allocating resources for children and youth. As part of efforts to implement its national strategy on the rights of the child, under which all forms of violence against children were prohibited, Croatia relied on a broad support system of stakeholders helping parents to ensure the well-being of children by stimulating their development, while maintaining consideration for the best interests of the child. Her Government also funded the implementation of projects by civil society organizations, including UNICEF, aimed at preventing violence against children and young people. The use of a multi-stakeholder approach that took children's views and perceptions into account was key when addressing the new challenges to child protection, such as information and communications technology, which offered new and exciting means of enhancing knowledge, skills and connections, but was also associated with a serious threat of violence.

92. Croatia would continue to adopt and implement the highest standards for protecting the rights of children and would cooperate with its partners and the international community to achieve a safer society for all children, including through its support for the Safe Schools Declaration, which signalled her Government's commitment to protecting students and educators from the effects of war.

93. **Mr. Da Costa Freitas** (Timor-Leste) said that children and young people made up half the population of his country. His Government was therefore committed to working towards achieving the goals set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in partnership with the global community, viewing the protection and promotion of their rights as a development priority. Following its ratification of the Convention in 2003, Timor-Leste had established a national commission to safeguard child rights and guarantee protection from discrimination and, pursuant to a recommendation by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, had developed its first interministerial

national action plan to serve as guideline for child protection services.

94. Timor-Leste defended the rights of all its citizens and continued to uphold their well-being through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Its Constitution contained provisions safeguarding children's rights across all sectors, including health, education and development. Measures taken to implement Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 4 included policies to guarantee access to inclusive education, ensure a safe and violence-free environment for learning and integrate basic information on sexual and reproductive health into the school curriculum; subsidies for mothers and a school meal programme to keep children from vulnerable families in school; and programmes to reduce infant mortality. Legislation had also been adopted to combat domestic violence and child labour and to allow pregnant students to sit exams and teenage mothers to return to school after giving birth.

95. Although some progress had been made, his delegation acknowledged that more efforts were required to increase protection for children in Timor-Leste, owing to existing practices, such as culturally-assigned gender roles and the resulting discrimination, which continued to have a negative impact on the lives and development of children.

96. **Ms. Pejanović Đurišić** (Montenegro) said that, despite progress made in transforming the lives of children since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, concerns remained about indications that, every year, 1 billion children experienced some form of violence or neglect, that thousands continued to die from preventable causes and that 30 per cent of trafficking victims were children.

97. Her Government had adopted key strategies to safeguard children's rights and protect them against violence, as well as comprehensive judiciary reforms to ensure broader access to justice for child victims and witnesses and for children in conflict with the law. It would continue to develop guidelines in that regard and had joined the regional initiative entitled, "Children's Equitable Access to Justice", to ensure that, in all proceedings concerning children, the judiciary looked after their best interests.

98. Although national legislation prohibited cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of children in all settings, including corporal punishment, domestic and school violence remained a serious challenge. Her Government's first-ever strategy for protecting children from violence was complemented by a campaign to end violence online and at home. Montenegro would continue to allocate resources to strengthen its penal

policy and provide appropriate services for victims, with particular attention given to implementing legislation on early marriage and to promoting positive parenting. Together with UNICEF and the European Union, national institutions would be implementing a multisectoral cooperation development programme and initiatives relating to immunization, early childhood education and skills-building for adolescents. A recent awareness campaign conducted by UNICEF and the Montenegro Agency for Electronic Media aimed to promote media literacy among parents and children and improve the quality of reporting on child rights issues.

99. In order to support the active participation of children and young people in the realization of their rights and in recognition of their role as both beneficiaries and key actors of change for the future, her Government had taken steps to ensure that their voices could be heard in the development of the strategic and legislative framework governing matters that concerned them.

100. **Ms. Gunasekera** (Sri Lanka) said that, as one of the early signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, her country remained deeply concerned about the situation of children worldwide. Despite ongoing improvements, the scale of challenges remained daunting, with many children being left behind. The 2030 Agenda provided strategic opportunities for the global community to invest in children and young people and thereby protect them from discrimination, inequality and abuse.

101. The education and health of children were widely recognized as drivers of poverty reduction, economic growth and the development of inclusive, peaceful and productive societies. Sri Lanka therefore continued to implement consistent and sustainable policies on both issues, resulting in near-universal participation in primary education and impressive high school enrolment rates, as well as advancements in maternal health services in rural areas. The remaining challenges needed to be accurately assessed and addressed, through data and evidence, to identify the children with the greatest needs, the barriers holding them back and the relevant solutions, to ensure that no child would be left behind and that all children could benefit from their rights without discrimination of any kind.

102. As part of its efforts to uphold a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of violence against children, Sri Lanka had recently joined the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children as a pathfinder country and was implementing its strategies nationwide in collaboration with UNICEF, and leading national and international non-governmental organizations. Having

signed and ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, her Government had subsequently strengthened its existing legal framework aimed at preventing those scourges.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.