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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 October 2019, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Braun ..... (Luxembourg)

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

**Agenda item 25: Social development**

*(continued)* (A/74/184)

- (a) **Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly** *(continued)* (A/74/135 and A/74/205)
- (b) **Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family** *(continued)* (A/74/61-E/2019/4, A/74/133, A/74/170 and A/74/170/Corr.1, A/74/175 and A/74/206)

1. **Ms. Hallsdóttir** (Iceland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that political will for youth inclusion had increased over the past few years in Iceland, as decision-makers realized the need for youth participation, consultation and expertise. However, progress was still needed in many areas, as there was no national youth policy, and current laws prevented young people under the age of 18 years from standing for election to boards of organizations and participating in democracy. Too often youth involvement was a token gesture, and youth voices were not truly heard, which discouraged young people's further engagement. Their participation should not be just a public relations strategy – young people contributed to society and could drive social progress.

2. For the past year young people had showcased their leadership by addressing the most urgent issues facing the world. In recent months children and young people in Iceland had joined millions across the globe in school strikes every Friday. Such unity was a clear appeal to world leaders that all individuals and nations should accept their responsibility for solving the climate crisis. Member States should commit to international cooperation, choose openness rather than isolation, and act in solidarity while acknowledging the importance of youth involvement. Young people were already a marginalized group, and individuals faced multiple forms of discrimination.

3. Iceland, although frequently ranked as the world's most gender-equal country, had still not managed to achieve full gender equality. In the wake of the #MeToo movement against gender-based violence, Icelandic women had related countless incidents of sexual violence and harassment, shedding light on the magnitude of gender-based violence still present in society.

4. On a global scale, one in three women had experienced sexual or domestic violence, millions of girls were out of school and every minute 23 girl children were married. There had also been a backlash against women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. Rights for which women had fought fiercely were now being threatened by individuals who did not believe that women should be allowed to make their own decisions about their lives and their bodies. Countries that aspired to defend human rights and be the leaders of the free world should be ardent supporters of women's human rights and their sexual and reproductive rights. Young people were pushing back and, tired of waiting for others to listen, were taking the lead. With the vision of a just and righteous society in a sustainable global community, young people were ready to make changes.

5. **Mr. El-Ansary** (Australia), speaking as a youth delegate, referred to a fundamental idea that had underpinned human development for centuries: people were only caretakers of the present, and their decisions would impact future generations. Four years previously, that idea had inspired 193 States to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the most ambitious commitment to sustainable development ever made. Despite the progress made, many young people remained uncertain about their future. Over the past six months he had consulted young people all over Australia and had seen how existing systems were both supporting and failing them. Yet they had an incredible capacity to change the world and every day were leading and shaping their communities with pragmatic and creative solutions.

6. His message on behalf of young Australians was one of hope, but it was tempered by the fear that the action taken was insufficient to address the critical issues and that young people did not have any say in their future. They had drawn attention to the crippling stigmas still surrounding mental health, the lack of education and employment opportunities in regional and rural communities, disparities in health care and public infrastructure, and an unbalanced justice system. They had spoken of the rising cost of living, unemployment, the scarcity of safe housing, and an inadequate education system. He had met young migrants who felt like aliens in their own country; young people with disabilities who struggled to access public spaces and basic services; members of the community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) persons who felt isolated, alone and at times unsafe; indigenous Australians who battled racism and dispossession every day. Young people spoke of their fear of climate change, a fear that was shared by millions

across the world. Thousands of young Australians were simply asking to be included. They saw themselves as global citizens, had ideas to contribute and were ready to work together towards sustainable development. It was an unprecedented opportunity to realise the untapped potential of the largest, most diverse and most educated generation in history.

7. Decision-makers were not only the caretakers of the present, but also architects of the future. Decision-makers should be ready to work with young people and embrace young people's ideas and solutions, including them in the conversations that shaped their lives. He hoped that children in 2030 would look back at the present as a time when the generations came together to meet their greatest challenges.

8. **Ms. Bavdaž Kuret** (Slovenia) said that the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, at its most recent session, had begun to discuss the normative content of the obligations to be assumed by States under an international standard. In implementing the 2030 Agenda, Member States shared the responsibility to strengthen the promotion and full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for older persons. Slovenia, together with the Group of Friends of the Human Rights of Older Persons, had delivered a joint statement at the recent forty-second session of the Human Rights Council. Her delegation would continue to promote discussions on the question of a legally binding framework to provide comprehensive protection of the rights of older persons.

9. At the national level, Slovenia had launched an awareness-raising campaign to counter negative perceptions of older persons, which included a travelling exhibition on ageism and inclusion. A national action plan for the efficient implementation of the strategy for a longer-lived society was based on an integrated approach that included long-term health care, long-term education, social care, the right to work and access to the labour market, and also addressed legal issues.

10. **Mr. Bole** (Slovenia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the increasingly digitalized world was bringing both threats and opportunities, especially in relation to social media. Digital literacy was important for young people in particular in view of privacy concerns, scams, disinformation and disappearing jobs. In Slovenia, almost all young people had adequate access to the Internet and the digital world and were expressing their opinions on global issues through social media. The topics discussed included environmental issues such as climate change, and in particular the Amazon fires.

11. In other countries, however, many young people were deprived of digital well-being. It was time for the United Nations to take leadership for an agenda for digital development goals, as an upgrade of the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure was of particular importance. Many decades previously, the Iron Curtain had been brought down. Now there was the risk of a new curtain separating those with advanced digital skills and training from those who had not had such opportunities. The digital curtain had to be brought down.

12. **Ms. Esono Kiebiyene** (Equatorial Guinea) said that human dignity and the right to a decent life were basic values upon which all human rights, and the Basic Law of Equatorial Guinea, were founded. The most recent national economic and social development plan included measures to eradicate poverty and support social inclusion, sustainable peace, productivity, industrialization and environmental sustainability by 2035, in particular in the following sectors: health, including legislation establishing free maternity, infant and elder care services and screening and treatment programmes for cancer and medical visits for malaria and HIV/AIDS; education, including literacy programmes and access to basic and continuing education services for all; decent work, including gender equality and pay equity legislation; and access to decent shelter and clean water, including social housing, drinking water and electricity.

13. Her Government's actions in that respect demonstrated its commitment, in line with Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and as reflected in its national development plan, to ensuring that the people of Equatorial Guinea continued to advance together and that its progress benefited everyone.

14. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that her country's national development model was people-centred and focused on economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals was a crucial priority and the 2019–2023 national development plan had been prepared in line with the 2030 Agenda. Special attention was given to children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, and efforts to empower women and girls focused on removing economic and social barriers.

15. It was imperative to raise awareness of the rights of older persons and to work on a social development agenda that took into account the new demographic realities and needs of the ageing population. Turkey had therefore intensified its efforts to improve living

conditions for older persons, including by hosting the first international Council on Ageing. The Council had provided a venue for high-level government officials, experts and civil society representatives from various countries to exchange ideas and best practices on topics such as the rights of older persons, active ageing, care services and the economics of ageing.

16. Significant steps had been taken in the past decade to ensure that persons with disabilities could participate in social life as equal citizens. Various legal arrangements were in place to increase their participation in education and employment.

17. Half of the Turkish population was under the age of 32 years, and their needs were addressed by appropriate government structures and policies. Young people were encouraged to participate fully in economic and social life, and the age limits for election to Parliament had been lowered. Active labour market policies, including flexible work arrangements and reforms, had had a positive impact on youth and female employment, while increased provision of child care had improved women's labour force participation.

18. As a result of conflicts in the region, Turkey hosted a refugee population of over 3.6 million, the largest in the world. Turkey provided health and social services to those with temporary protection permits, particularly children and the elderly. Over time, the focus was shifting to longer-term and development-oriented support. Greater international cooperation and meaningful burden- and responsibility-sharing was needed to provide assistance to all displaced persons in need.

19. **Mr. Rivera Roldan** (Peru) said that his country was fully committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and working towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Accordingly, social development and the well-being of the population was a priority of general government policy for the period up to 2021, the year of the bicentenary of the country's independence. One specific target was a drastic reduction in the prevalence of anaemia in children under 3 years of age and in pregnant women. The multisectoral plan to counter anaemia provided for intersectoral and intergovernmental coordination of interventions by regional and local governments.

20. In 2018, Peru had hosted the third session of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. By chairing the Conference for the period 2018–2020, Peru had demonstrated its commitment to making progress in the priority areas of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development. Significant progress had

been possible in the country thanks to sustainable economic growth combined with solid macroeconomic policy. National development and financing policies gave priority to education, health and infrastructure, to help citizens be competitive in global markets. Such efforts were enshrined in the 2050 Vision for Peru, which was designed to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Peru to achieve a dignified life for all persons.

21. Nevertheless, social development depended not only on economic growth but also on public policies focused on reducing poverty and supporting social inclusion. The Government's policies would reduce poverty by 15 per cent and ensure that all homes had access to an integrated package of water and sanitation, electricity and telecommunications services. The Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion ensured that the policies and programmes of all sectors and levels of government were coordinated and interlinked to cover any gaps in access to public services.

22. In the context of efforts to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and in compliance with the commitments expressed in its voluntary national report of 2017, Peru would formulate a strategic plan for national development to guide policy at all levels of government. The Government would continue to focus its efforts on all areas of vulnerability.

23. **Ms. Chifwaila** (Zambia) said that her country's national development plans would reduce inequalities by focusing on all-inclusive and people-centred economic growth. The Government had continued to increase social protection coverage, especially in rural areas, while workers in the informal sector now had access to the social security system. As of June 2019, over 18,000 workers were registered with the pension authority.

24. Population ageing was a universal phenomenon that would shape the future. In its national policy on ageing launched in 2015, the Government had addressed all interrelated issues of old age and poverty, including health, food and nutrition; employment and income security; transport and living environments. As a result of labour law reforms, a single labour code had been adopted in April 2019 to consolidate provisions on employment, the minimum wage and conditions of service.

25. The attainment of universal health coverage was a priority, and Zambia was making efforts to provide highly trained human resources for health care service delivery. Infrastructure improvements were also required.

26. **Archbishop Auza** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the creation of new opportunities for older persons in education and employment enabled them to continue to be full members of society. It was also important to ensure that they received proper care and medical services, especially at the end of life. The same opportunities should be available to persons with disabilities, who faced many forms of discrimination. Unfortunately, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities failed to ensure protection for those who were the most vulnerable and defenceless – those diagnosed with disabilities in the womb. The high rate of abortion in such cases reflected the worst form of discrimination.

27. Young people also experienced exclusion and lack of employment opportunities, which deprived them of the possibility of contributing to the development of society. In some parts of the world they were prey to radicalization and recruitment into armed groups. Some chose to migrate to other countries, only to find their contribution rejected. Quality and inclusive education was fundamental for overcoming inequalities.

28. The most effective social protection policy for older persons, young people and those with disabilities was to invest in the family, which provided a solid safety net and made society more inclusive. Social programmes and initiatives should support the primary role of the family in caring for older persons, young people and persons with disabilities. It was more important than ever to strengthen common efforts to protect the poorest and the weakest in order to attain true social development.

29. **Mr. Verdier** (Argentina) said that eradicating poverty in all its forms was among the greatest challenges facing the international community and that social inequality and high poverty levels were the main barriers to the full enjoyment of human rights and to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development. In order to implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, comprehensive, cross-cutting and rights-based public policies that jointly addressed social inclusion were required, to ensure the participation of vulnerable members of all social groups at every stage of life.

30. Argentina had a strong social protection system that was designed to ensure a minimum income, thereby improving quality of life and promoting social mobility. It was complemented by specific policies intended to ensure gender equality and the inclusion of persons with disabilities, children, older persons, indigenous persons and migrants, and other members of vulnerable groups. Applying a multidimensional focus to the structure of

the social protection system had led to an increase in coverage among all population segments. Public education was free and mandatory, and public health care was universal, free and complemented by a subsystem that provided extensive and equitable coverage in line with social welfare criteria. In addition, a national gender-sensitive budget was under development, as was a national strategy on early childhood care that included strengthened coverage for the care of very young children.

31. The family, in its various forms, played a fundamental role in Argentina, both as a key institution for human and social development and as a network imparting a sense of belonging and providing a source of care, in line with United Nations human rights instruments and corresponding international action plans and programmes. It was also important to continue to work towards the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons, through the development of a universal, international and binding legal instrument that guaranteed their full participation in the development of society, free from violence, discrimination, indifference, abuse and mistreatment.

32. **Ms. Hyungwon Suh** (Republic of Korea), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people accounted for 16 per cent of the global population and had both rights and responsibilities as agents of change, innovation and improvement. The United Nations Youth Strategy, launched in 2018, acknowledged the potential and strength of young people and aimed to empower them in every domain.

33. As the founder of a youth-led non-governmental organization (NGO) involved in citizenship education, she had met thousands of young people from her country and been amazed by their insights and ideas. The Republic of Korea was financing institutions and policies to support youth entrepreneurship, and experts were tackling inequalities at different levels. Protecting the mental health of the young generation had been a major concern in education for some time.

34. Although young people could suggest creative and practical solutions, they were often hesitant to put them forward, as their lack of experience was often interpreted as a lack of knowledge and power. If no one listened to them, they would feel helpless and give up. Action for youth empowerment was not merely a matter of increasing the channels through which young people could express themselves. Young people needed to feel that their actions were effective. The international community should accept the contributions and insights of young persons and give them true agency in society.

35. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, said that his father, as an immigrant, had had a positive experience of integration into the Norwegian educational system. Unfortunately, that was not the case for every immigrant, displaced person and refugee. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had estimated that 3.7 million displaced children had dropped out of school, and educational infrastructure was seriously lacking in refugee camps around the globe. Integration into national systems was often chaotic or non-existent, and the teacher-student ratio for displaced children and youth was 1 to 70.

36. Other marginalized groups included indigenous children and youth, who faced racial and assimilation biases in national educational systems. They were denied an education in their native language, while educational systems erased their culture and traditions from collective memory, making them second-class citizens. Indigenous persons made up 5 per cent of the global population, but 15 per cent of the world's poorest.

37. Education was an established human right and had to be at the centre of development. Sustainable Development Goal target 4.5 included access to all levels of education for the vulnerable. Norwegian youth called on the United Nations and the international community to ensure access to education for all children and young persons.

38. **Ms. Gunnufsen** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the young generation – the largest youth generation of all times – would inherit a world with great challenges and would be a force for change. In areas of conflict, young people were often portrayed as victims or perpetrators, but they could play a key role in the solution if they were given the opportunity to contribute.

39. More than 600 million young people lived in fragile States or States affected by conflict. In many fragile States, they were the majority of the population, which was a further risk factor for armed conflict. Youth was not the problem, but rather a symptom. Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) focused specifically on the contribution of youth to peace and security, highlighting young persons as positive factors of change and the importance of including them in all stages of peacebuilding. All Member States should implement those resolutions to ensure sustainable and lasting peace.

40. **Mr. García Paz y Miño** (Ecuador) said that it was essential to develop strategies to mitigate inequalities and achieve sustainable development for all through fiscal, wage and social protection policies. Twenty-four years after the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration

on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, both remained fully relevant. Despite the efforts made to reduce inequality and poverty, further structural change in social and economic policy was needed to ensure a better distribution of income and wealth within society.

41. Social protection was a key political instrument for reducing inequality and poverty while promoting inclusive growth. His Government was therefore developing a road map outlining State actions to benefit all people, throughout their life cycle, in its national development plan for 2017–2021, which was designed to protect the rights of groups requiring priority action in Ecuador. The plan provided comprehensive and intersectoral social protections intended to improve quality of life through social services and goods, including early childhood programmes that offered health, nutrition, education and safety services; universal access to decent new homes, which were often provided free of charge; programmes and services for people with disabilities, including monetary incentives for caregivers; increased employment for persons with disabilities and legislation guaranteeing their rights; access to free education at all levels; guaranteed employment and social security through public-private partnership strategies promoting youth insertion in the labour market and incentives to hire young students; and welfare protection for older persons through timely medical care and services, educational and recreational activities and universal retirement and old-age pensions. In addition, in 2019, Ecuador had ratified the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons.

42. Middle income countries still faced significant challenges with regard to eradicating poverty, and Ecuador would continue to work towards achieving a more inclusive society through a comprehensive policy that guaranteed respect for rights.

43. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that the significance of the outcome documents of the global high-level meeting for social development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly could not be overestimated. That was reflected in the 2030 Agenda, which included the ending of hunger and poverty and the reduction of inequality within and among countries. The Commission for Social Development played a key role in the United Nations system in developing agreed actions at governmental level for youth, older persons and persons with disabilities and in strengthening the institution of the family. Despite the unlawful and unilateral sanctions imposed on his country, the Russian Federation was fulfilling all social obligations to its people. The

reduction of poverty and improvement of the living conditions of all citizens was a social policy priority.

44. On 1 October 2019, the salaries of all civil servants had been indexed and on 1 January 2020 the minimum wage would be increased by 7.5 per cent to bring it in line with the minimum subsistence level, a measure that would benefit over 3 million persons. In addition, 31 million pensioners would receive a 6.6 per cent addition to their pensions. On 1 February 2020, the monthly benefits of all vulnerable persons, including persons with disabilities would be increased by 4 per cent.

45. Vocational training was a priority of State youth policy, and vocational education centres had been given additional funding as well as improved training for their teaching staff. His delegation welcomed the outcome of the forty-fifth World Skills Competition, held in Kazan in August 2019.

46. Care for older persons was another priority, and over the past year a federal project had helped over 53,000 persons to improve their qualifications and learn new skills. As part of that project and to increase life expectancy, the Government had established a long-term care system for older persons and persons with disabilities, which included the provision of social services both at home and at in-patient and out-patient facilities. The 2020 federal budget included 31 million dollars for that purpose.

47. The Russian Federation had made consistent efforts to improve the situation of persons with disabilities. In the near future the Government would amend the law governing the administrative responsibility of individuals and entities for violations of the rights of persons with disabilities, such as failure to provide access to buildings and social and transport infrastructure. It had taken into consideration the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities following consideration of the initial report of the Russian Federation in 2018.

48. The promotion of traditional family values and protection of the family were of particular importance. Despite the fact that Russian women were seeking full-time employment and career development, childbirth and child care remained crucial to them. The State gave priority to creating the conditions that allowed women to combine their family and professional lives.

49. **Mr. Dinh** Nho Hung (Viet Nam) said that the world was facing persistent and emerging challenges. Viet Nam, in particular, had required support from the international community to rebuild, modernize and industrialize following decades of war, and it continued

to receive assistance for its ongoing struggle with residual explosive remnants of war, which affected the livelihoods of millions of people, and for its efforts to achieve a mine-free country by 2025 and thereby contribute to an enabling environment for social development.

50. One of the country's highest development priorities was poverty reduction. The national programme for sustainable poverty reduction for 2016–2020 had reduced the proportion of poor households; millions of underprivileged people had benefited from free health insurance and monthly social welfare payments; poor and low-income households had received housing assistance; and thousands of poor households had received assistance to build storm- and flood-resistant houses.

51. New challenges threatened that progress, however, and climate change was one of the most serious, with Viet Nam among the countries most severely affected. His Government was therefore assisting with adaptation efforts, in particular through its 2016–2020 programme for climate change adaptation and green growth and its 2016–2020 programme for sustainable forestry development. Studies were undertaken regularly to update the climate change and rising sea level scenario, and steps were being taken to end the use of single-use plastics by 2025. Much had been said in recent years about climate change, but not enough about action. The international community must work together, with the greatest sense of urgency, responsibility and commitment, to save the planet for future generations.

52. **Mr. Sahraoui** (Algeria) said that slow social development progress had hampered the ability of many Member States to meet their commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Nevertheless, Algeria had been able to reach a high level of development and achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals through its national development plans. The education strategy of the current national development plan provided for full and free access for all to primary and secondary education, which had resulted in an enrolment rate of 98.5 per cent for children of six years of age. At the start of the school year 2019/20, 1.5 million students attended university, and over 60 per cent of them were women. Moreover, a national campaign had reduced the illiteracy rate to about 8.5 per cent, compared to 85 per cent in 1962. The Government had also set up mechanisms to provide education to children with disabilities in specialized institutions or in special classes at fully or partially integrated schools. The Algerian public health system was anchored on the principles of free health care, equal access to care and universal availability of health care

to all citizens. As the rights to health and education were inalienable human rights, Algeria provided migrants and refugees with tuition and health care free of charge. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda was, however, dependent on the mobilization of financial resources, the provision of technical assistance and the transfer of technology. To promote the achievement of Goals 3 and 4, in particular, Member States should strengthen international cooperation and encourage stakeholders to share their expertise and know-how.

53. **Ms. Azucena** (Philippines) said that her country had developed *AmBisyon Natin 2040*, a 25-year programme for the creation of a just, inclusive and equitable society. The 2017–2022 national plan, which was based on *AmBisyon Natin 2040*, set out measures for achieving economic growth, a resilient society and a globally competitive economy, as well as for improving the social fabric and reducing inequality. Under the current plan, the Philippines had reduced poverty to 21 per cent and recorded a growth rate of 5.5 per cent and an employment rate of 94 per cent. The *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme*, a conditional cash-transfer programme, had helped some 32,000 beneficiaries escape poverty. Recent legislation guaranteed students free access to higher education in public universities and vocational institutions.

54. The 2017–2022 national plan also prioritized the human rights and development of vulnerable groups. The Government had thus instituted a day for women with disabilities, provided persons with disabilities free access to health care and expressed its commitment to the *Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific*. In its youth policies, the Philippines granted young people a platform for participating in local politics from the age of 15 and had enacted a law in 2015 to provide young entrepreneurs with grants, loans and training. The Philippines consistently worked with indigenous peoples to ensure their full enjoyment of their human rights.

55. **Mr. Hernández** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the twenty-fifth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development was an appropriate time to reflect on progress and commitments made in the area of social development. The 2019–2024 development plan of Mexico had been designed to reduce inequality by making all Government programmes and policies consistent with the commitments made at the United Nations, especially with regard to the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

56. Member States must accelerate efforts to promote equality and ensure that opportunities were not determined by factors such as gender, age, ethnic origin, migratory status, socioeconomic situation and disabilities. The dissemination of hate speech was particularly worrying, whether in democratic countries or under authoritarian regimes, as it led to the stigmatization of groups or individuals, disruption of the social fabric and the incitement of violence. Mexico considered that diversity and multiculturalism enriched society and was determined to eradicate inequality by promoting the well-being of its citizens and ensuring that they could exercise their rights rather than merely being beneficiaries of programmes.

57. Ultimately, social development should be treated in a holistic manner by the United Nations since it was central to sustainable development. Although it had not been possible to reform the Commission for Social Development, it was imperative to overcome the inertia of the past, which was hindering progress towards the 2030 Agenda. The reform of the Economic and Social Council would be a unique opportunity to achieve progress in that regard.

58. **Mr. Aye** (Myanmar) said that his Government had adopted a law to improve the protection of the rights of older persons and had increased the allocation of budgetary funds to that issue. In line with international treaties to which it was party, especially the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Myanmar had adopted a law to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and established a national committee to promote their welfare. The Government of Myanmar considered inequality a priority issue and had drawn up a sustainable development plan for the period 2018–2030 with the aim of creating decent jobs, improving efficiency, accountability and predictability in administrative decision-making and strengthening anti-corruption legislation. Improved economic integration at the regional level would further help to distribute the benefits of the prevailing global economic system more equally. Strategies should be devised to improve cooperation among Member States and facilitate collaboration with international organizations.

59. **Ms. Pham Hoang** (Romania) and **Mr. Blidaru** (Romania), youth delegates, said that insufficient progress had been made in the education sector despite repeated appeals for improvement by youth delegates at the United Nations. Since the Sustainable Development Goals were not merely ambitious aims for young people but the backdrop to their future lives, their active engagement in sustainable development efforts was essential. The United Nations should regularly assess implementation of the Goals, help countries to develop



their education systems and provide institutions and NGOs with the tools needed to understand and implement the Goals. International organizations should also recognize mental health disorders as real threats to young people's future.

60. Member States and Governments also had a key role to play to ensure that educators and curricula were tailored to the needs of the twenty-first century and to provide young people with the necessary infrastructure and technology to have access to educational opportunities. In addition, multisectoral efforts were needed to tackle discrimination and provide young people from remote areas or disadvantaged backgrounds with equal opportunities and to make professional counselling and career orientation an integral part of school-to-school and school-to-work transitions. Young people should also have access to universal health coverage, not only for treatment, but also for preventive purposes. Lastly, young people from around the world should motivate themselves to become more involved in decision-making structures and try to replicate the best practices of other States in their home country.

61. **Mr. Moussa** (Djibouti) said that the 2030 Agenda and the 2015 Paris Agreement had shown how important social development was to the international community, while the holding in September 2019 of the Climate Action Summit and the high-level dialogue on financing for development would contribute to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Djibouti had made considerable progress in its social development policies in recent years. Since 2014, health insurance had been mandatory for the active population and health assistance was provided to those unable to work, a policy that was being extended to migrants and refugees. In its pursuit of target 3.8 on universal health coverage, the Government had also been working to digitize and integrate its health-care system, as well as to make it patient-centred. Nevertheless, like many sub-Saharan African countries, it had struggled with the excessive costs associated with non-communicable diseases both for the families of those affected and for the national insurance system. Djibouti had made considerable progress in improving its provision of high-quality education for all by increasing the availability and quality of teaching, especially in rural areas.

62. **Ms. Koopman** (Belgium), youth delegate, said that young people were often underrepresented in many places, but that the United Nations Youth Delegate Programme was a good example of how they could be included in discussions at the international level. Similarly, the Youth Climate Summit, held in September 2019, had provided young people with a platform to showcase their solutions to climate change and engage

with decision makers on the defining issue of their time. Since many Member States had not used that opportunity to find common solutions, she urged them to incorporate more young people into their delegations and to pay more attention to their participation. The holding of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth 2019 and Youth Forum Lisboa+21 in June 2019 was a clear sign that the importance of youth participation was growing and that policy makers were taking notice.

63. **Mr. Declercq** (Belgium), youth delegate, said that policymakers should do more to listen to the views of young people. To that end, schools must endeavour to provide students with a better understanding of democratic society and their place within it, youth assemblies should be established and young people should be given a voice in their local communities, including on budgetary matters. At the national level, youth councils and youth organizations could play a pivotal role to enhance the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes. Although the United Nations had in recent years shown more ambition in its youth policies, young people should be provided with more opportunities to have an impact on decision-making both in the United Nations system and at the national and local levels.

64. **Mr. Khashaan** (Saudi Arabia) said that the solution to poverty varied from one society to the next, since it involved a complicated interplay of economic, social, cultural, legislative and political variables. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the Government had introduced reforms to reduce the country's financial deficit and regulate taxation and developed a social protection scheme to protect low-income families and improve equality. It had also developed over 20 initiatives for persons with disabilities, standardized its classification of disabilities and established a dedicated body to assist them. The Government had, in addition, invested in various initiatives to support older persons, including through the provision of nursing homes and monthly allocations. In accordance with the Declaration of Astana, Saudi Arabia had also taken measures to develop health-care infrastructure, increase the number of specialized clinics and develop electronic systems for booking medical appointments.

65. **Mr. Sparks** (Hungary), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Goal 3 was the most important of the Sustainable Development Goals, since health and well-being were prerequisites for all other aspects of life. Primary prevention, which focused on preventing disease before it occurred, was always more beneficial than secondary or tertiary prevention, which reduced or slowed the impact of disease after it had already

occurred. In that vein and in line with Goal 4, educating young children to become more health-conscious could reduce the consumption of cigarettes, drugs, alcohol and unhealthy food and lead to a lower incidence of chronic diseases, a healthier society and the diversion of health-related expenditure to other Goals. The current extent of global warming and high levels of pollution meant that the state of the planet had already reached the secondary prevention stage. It might still be possible to save the planet, but not much time was available. The role of education was crucial.

66. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) said that inequality within countries had widened to dangerous levels, not least because the social, economic and political paradigms that had dominated policies in the previous century had benefited only a few, at the expense of humanity and the planet. Eritrea had made modest strides in its social development, with a focus on human capital and key infrastructure projects, and aspired to achieving middle-income status by 2030. The Government was committed to securing the social well-being of all, especially disadvantaged social groups, and it had adopted inclusive policies for persons with disabilities. Eritrean cultural practices also helped to foster an inclusive environment. Women had equal rights and opportunities to those of men and their equality and empowerment was mainstreamed in all sectors. More investment and cooperation initiatives should be harnessed to help young people, and the country's development strategy was anchored on the creation of economic opportunities for them. The current era of peace in the Horn of Africa was a momentous opportunity to make up for decades lost to conflict and to accelerate efforts to transform economies in the region.

67. **Ms. Filipiova** (Czechia) and **Ms. Kvasničková** (Czechia), speaking as youth delegates, said that 2019 had stood out as a year of significant civic engagement by young people; gatherings in the Czech Republic had conjured up memories of the mainly youth-led initiative of the 1989 Velvet Revolution. To enhance youth involvement at all levels, intergenerational dialogue must become the norm, stimulated by innovative, interactive and inclusive education. Given that 50 per cent of Czech students claimed that their education was incompatible with work and their everyday life, efforts should be made to improve skills such as critical thinking, fact-checking and working with information, in order to foster better decision-making and help young people to cope with the rapidly increasing flow of information. Special efforts were needed to enhance Internet and climate literacy, as society was being polarized by the lack of clear information on climate

change – the one issue that threatened everyone's human rights. The climate dialogue must shift from accusations to mutual trust in human rights protection and solidarity for people affected by climate instability. Young people could devise effective solutions, but Member States must first grant them more opportunities to participate.

68. **Mr. Amayo** (Kenya) said that the 2030 Agenda could be achieved only by placing people at the core of development, since disparities in health, education and other dimensions of human development kept disadvantaged sectors of the population trapped in cycles of poverty. The Government of Kenya had invested heavily in education, including by providing for a 100 per cent transition from primary to secondary school; free secondary school education for day schools; re-entry for girls who had dropped out of schooling as a result of pregnancy; and the provision of free sanitary towels to schoolgirls. As a result, the average number of years spent in school in Kenya was among the highest in the region. Kenya was also increasing its investment in health care and was committed to achieving universal health coverage by 2022 while also bringing down medical costs for its citizens. Various social protection systems enabled vulnerable families to access services: the National Safety Net programme helped orphans, vulnerable children, seniors and persons with disabilities; a cash transfer programme allocated \$200 million to over 1.3 million Kenyan beneficiaries; and a youth enterprise development fund launched in 2007 boosted youth employment through the provision of loans and business development services and the teaching of entrepreneurial skills.

69. **Ms. Loiwal** (India), speaking as a youth delegate, said that innovative measures taken by India in pursuit of inclusive growth had successfully reduced multidimensional poverty, and social protection programmes were increasingly linked with broader development priorities to achieve equitable outcomes. Empowering people through the use of information and communications technology had been a driving force behind its transformation initiatives, including a biometry-based unique identification system and a unique disability ID card to facilitate access to social services. Millions of people now had access to bank accounts and financial services. In addition, technology had enabled billions of dollars to be disbursed to millions of people, and billions of dollars had been saved through efficiency gains. A network of common service centres provided access to public utility services in rural and remote areas.

70. India maintained the world's largest health-care assurance programme and had run the world's largest sanitation campaign. Programmes had been launched to

eradicate malnutrition by 2022, to protect women and children from indoor air pollution and to ensure retirement income for employees in the informal sector. A new government ministry had been established to address water-related issues, and legislation had been enacted to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

71. In order to ensure employment opportunities for its large youth population and make skills development responsive to the needs of both industry and citizens, the Government was training millions of young people to start their own enterprises and extending affordable and collateral-free loans to start-ups. Young women accounted for 75 per cent of the beneficiaries. India now had the second-largest start-up ecosystem in the world, with the green economy having emerged as a leading employment generator. The renewable energy sector provided employment for over 700,000 people, and India was one of the first countries to collaborate with the International Labour Organization on the Green Jobs Initiative.

72. Inspired by the ideology of assisting the weakest members of society for the development of all and of respect for nature, India aimed to achieve an economically, socially and digitally inclusive society through South-South cooperation and partnerships with other developing countries and through its commitment to fulfilling the pledge of leaving no one behind.

73. **Ms. Korac** (United States of America) said that reform of the Commission for Social Development was the surest path to advancing social development and to ensuring that vulnerable groups shared in the benefits of development and that no one was left behind. As more recently-established United Nations mechanisms, bodies and frameworks addressed the same concerns more effectively and in greater depth, the question was whether the Commission should still exist as a separate subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council or whether its mandate could be transferred to other parts of the United Nations system, such as the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was now the main United Nations forum for considering the human rights of persons living with disabilities worldwide.

74. If the Commission was to continue to exist, its functions must be made consistent with the Secretary-General's reform agenda to operate efficiently, add value to the work of the United Nations and avoid duplication. Shorter sessions, with informal negotiations continuing to begin several weeks earlier, would allow enough time for the production of a single thematic outcome document each year. Progress made in 2019 included a resolution on working methods that

provided for biennial resolutions and elimination of the mandate to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which was now an outdated document. Recommendations for further reforms would be discussed in future sessions, including the possibility of removing disability issues from the purview of the Commission for Social Development altogether, and were consistent with decisions made during the Economic and Social Council revitalization process. The goal was to halve the number of reports, conferences and negotiations so that United Nations resources could be used to make tangible improvements on the ground.

75. **Ms. Sundqvist** (Finland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the world had become more interconnected than ever, through widespread dependence on global value chains and services that relied on foreign workers, and that the same stressors, in particular climate change, affected everyone. While overlooking the basic principles of social equality, societies were facing growing anxiety and hostility, which had been transferred from the international to the national level.

76. As a result of shrinking civic spaces and increased inequality, individuals from different backgrounds were segregated into neighbourhoods and bubbles of like-minded people. While the Internet had created new platforms for engagement and connection, the use of algorithms had further triggered the social polarization of opinions and lived experiences. The lack of understanding of "the other" led to dehumanization, demonization and securitization, with personal anxieties reflected in a growing amount of hate speech, in particular online, affecting young people in particular, as well as women and individuals affiliated with minority groups, and deterring their participation in such spaces. While inclusive associations and leisure activities played a crucial role in increasing social capital and building trust, emphasis must be placed on supporting civil society, including movements, campaigns and petitions, and on guaranteeing a safe environment in which to operate and protest.

77. The global Fridays for Future climate movement, now recognized at the highest political levels, was a good example of bottom-up political engagement. Best practices should follow on a broader scale, thus opening up room for horizontal discussion and moving away from short-sighted recognition of civil society actors to holistic acceptance of new forms of participation as a cornerstone of agenda-setting. Such practices would not only affect policy-making, but also lessen intolerance, increase belief in democratic institutions and potentially spark a new kind of emancipatory action. Most

importantly, it would strengthen trust among people and broaden social and political horizons.

78. **Ms. Khoo** (Singapore) said that population ageing was a major global trend, and that more people were enjoying longer and healthier lives, including in Singapore, which had one of the highest average life expectancies at birth in the world. Preparations for that demographic transition required international action in order to fulfil the 2030 Agenda.

79. In its national action plan for successful ageing, Singapore had embraced the approach of harnessing science, technology and innovation to meet the challenges of an ageing population. The Government also remained committed to ensuring inclusive growth and digital participation, including for older persons, and fostered innovative solutions for issues of ageing that were formulated from their own perspective. A dedicated mobile app had been developed to help older persons to locate health and social programmes near their homes or at their workplaces.

80. In an effort to coordinate programmes and services across sectors, the Government had adopted a geospatial urban planning analytics tool to gather localized data on the needs of older persons, better identify hotspots and plan new health and social programmes accordingly. In line with the recommendations of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Singapore had transformed how it supported older persons by facilitating ageing in place, to avoid the physical and psychological disruptions of moving to an unfamiliar environment and improve their quality of life by enabling them to remain independent while remaining close to loved ones. Singapore had established active ageing hubs that promoted multigenerational interaction and provided access to social and health-care services. The Government had also passed legislation allowing the State to intervene as a last resort in cases where vulnerable adults were suffering or at risk and were deemed to require stronger protection and support.

81. In addition, Singapore had established measures to facilitate the continued employment of older persons and prevent age discrimination in the workplace. Many organizations had reaped significant returns in workforce stability and productivity from re-employing older employees. The best way to build a nation for all ages, where older persons lived independently and could participate meaningfully in society, was by embracing innovation, fostering collaboration and taking collective responsibility for the well-being of older persons, so that no one was left behind.

82. **Ms. Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the fabric of Syrian society was founded on traditions of solidarity and complementarity among the various social classes and groups. Those traditions remained vibrant and active despite recent events and the passing of many generations, so that the country was capable of transforming change into positive energy, even in the face of crises and challenges.

83. Through numerous reforms and socioeconomic policies aimed at strengthening institutions and infrastructure, the Syrian Arab Republic had implemented targeted programmes to support members of various social groups, including persons with disabilities, young people and older persons, and to realize sustainable and balanced development. Despite unilateral, illegal and illegitimate measures, which were among the challenges and threats facing Syrians and all peoples worldwide, especially among those marginalized groups, and the repercussions of the terrorist war against the Syrian Arab Republic, her country remained committed to providing basic services to citizens, in particular in the area of social development. The Government had bolstered the three pillars of its social security system to ensure benefits for members of the most vulnerable groups. Her country also provided development assistance that fostered inclusion of the poor in society.

84. Creating a climate conducive to social development, however, required solidarity in national and international efforts on all issues under consideration. Israel continued to occupy the Syrian Golan, impose coercive unilateral measures and support terrorism. Such behaviour, which thwarted the efforts of the international community, affected the capacity of Syrian institutions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

85. **Mr. Barro** (Senegal) said that action to reduce social inequality and achieve inclusion across all levels of society was essential to achieving the goal of eradicating poverty. Such action was at the heart of efforts taken by his Government. Senegal had adopted a plan, to be achieved by 2035, that supported human capital, social protection and sustainable development. In 2019, the plan had made it possible to consolidate earlier achievements, strengthen social programmes and launch initiatives in such areas as universal health care and public health services, financing for small and medium-sized enterprises, the empowerment of women, young people and persons with disabilities, support for older persons and job creation in rural areas.

86. In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, States must make sweeping reforms to the field of

education and training and reflect on how the education system as a whole could be used to achieve the goals set for 2030. Senegal had already seen improvements to gender parity in elementary-, primary- and junior-level schooling, and its literacy and vocational training programme was aimed in particular at reducing illiteracy among women and rural populations. The need to strengthen international cooperation for social development, in particular with regard to universal and equitable access to basic education and health care, had led his Government to call on donors to respect the commitments made at the Global Partnership for Education Financing Conference, held in Dakar in February 2018.

87. **Ms. Alnesf** (Qatar) said that her country had adopted human rights-centred strategies and legislative and executive procedures and measures aimed at enabling all social groups to benefit from development-related dividends. In its national, regional and international development policies, Qatar prioritized education and employment as fundamental to realizing sustainable development, eradicating poverty and combating extremism among young people. In 2020, Qatar would also be hosting the Second International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes.

88. Through various foundations, Qatar had provided quality education to millions of children and young people worldwide, in particular in areas affected by conflict and natural disasters, and had launched numerous initiatives to fight youth unemployment by equipping young people with resources and jobs. One such programme, coordinated together with the World Health Organization, was designed to create close to 2 million health-sector jobs in Africa by 2022. The programme had been discussed at a side event on universal health coverage, held in the margins of the high-level debate of the General Assembly, on the International Day of Older Persons. Qatar had established legislation to ensure access to services for older persons and the social integration of persons with disabilities, and its national strategies took into account their needs, rights and concerns. Her Government looked forward to hosting the International Conference on the Comprehensive Development of Persons with Disabilities in December 2019, the outcomes of which would help to enrich international debate on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sustainable development and ensure that they would not be left behind.

89. As the family was the anchor of society, Qatar continued its efforts to achieve the goals of the International Year of the Family, facilitating negotiations on that subject and providing financial

support to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the 2019–2020 period. Her Government remained committed to continuing its efforts to promote national, regional and international social development for all.

90. **Ms. Calem-Sangiorgio** (Monaco) said the contributions of older persons to society were invaluable in terms of authority, cultural transmission and conflict resolution. Older persons were also vulnerable, however, and many were victims of discrimination, mistreatment or even violence, especially women, who tended to live longer than men. Nevertheless, of the thousands of United Nations recommendations on discrimination, fewer than 1 per cent addressed the situation of older persons.

91. Monaco, which had one of the highest life expectancies in the world, had a long tradition of assuring protection, care and inclusion for older persons. Since 1949, a national old-age pension had guaranteed them a minimum monthly income. The Principality had recently adopted a national plan to support ageing and dependency care to older persons, with quality of life and ageing in place set as priorities. Additional measures taken included reviews of and the establishment of regulations for service provider rates, the establishment of reporting procedures and the ongoing assessment of home-based solutions, such as the installation of 24-hour emergency alarm systems connecting homes to the fire department, daily personalized meal delivery services and access to home-based care and service providers. Monaco had also created a transportation system for persons with reduced mobility and provided free bus passes to residents over the age of 60. The Principality also ensured that specialized residences were available for dependent persons, and additional establishments were being adapted to meet growing and changing needs.

92. In its report on the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing for the period 2012–2017, Monaco noted that it had implemented all priority measures, including those intended to support social, economic, cultural and political inclusion, combat marginalization and promote physical and mental health and well-being.

93. **Ms. Wójcik** (Poland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that 2019 was the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and 2020 would see the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, two occasions that provided momentum for the international community to step up its efforts to protect and promote the rights of children and young people.

94. Enduring inequalities, insufficient educational opportunities and limited scope for social expression continued to be of great concern to young people across Poland, where the focus on material aspects of economic growth had had an adverse impact on their quality of life, their enjoyment of human rights and their prospects for social advancement. A lack of adequate funding and information meant that schools in small towns and villages were less willing to join in international projects, and knowledge of educational opportunities did not reach aspiring students. Deficient public transportation between cities and rural areas further hindered access by rural youth to educational institutions. Local governance systems, Member States and civil society should strive to maximize the potential benefits of urbanization for rural economies and reduce inequalities within and among countries.

95. Integrating civic and human rights education and increased social involvement into modern education systems worldwide was necessary to prevent the radicalization of the views of young people, in particular among marginalized groups experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination and abuse. Given that young people would make up more than half of the global population by 2050, and despite the growing number of youth organizations and councils in regional and central government structures, it was essential for global leaders and policymakers to establish adequate legal and institutional guarantees to ensure that the voices of young people were not only heard but understood and taken into account in decision-making processes.

96. Since structural inequalities, insufficient educational opportunities and limited youth participation were global problems, more must be done to secure the rights and meet the needs of young people living in areas of armed conflict, including by engaging them in all phases of peacebuilding and resilience-building. Access to education and social opportunities was also crucial to achieving other Sustainable Development Goals. Young people were the future, and their rights and opinions needed to be acknowledged today.

97. **Mr. Chekeche** (Zimbabwe) said that his country remained committed to the implementation of the social development agenda, as evidenced by its integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into national development priorities and programmes. Various measures adopted by Zimbabwe to meet the challenges involved in leaving no one behind and reaching those furthest behind first included the establishment of a land reform programme with reserved ownership quotas for women and partnership programmes for youth that had helped to enhance food security, create employment and

foster the commercialization of agriculture. Government focal desks were established and apprenticeship programmes created to streamline youth development and empowerment and reduce youth unemployment. In 2018, the right to basic State-funded primary and secondary education was approved for all children, with special provisions for those with disabilities. Zimbabwe had also introduced a levy to mobilize financial resources for its national AIDS response programme, which was a best practice model for HIV and AIDS care in other countries.

98. In June and July 2018, the Government had launched specialized banks to champion women and youth financial inclusion and empowerment. In addition, various social security schemes and cash transfer programmes existed for retirees, older people and persons with disabilities, as well as orphans and child-headed households, providing critical support for vulnerable members of society. With gender equality a constitutional core priority, Zimbabwe monitored the implementation of gender-related laws and policies and adherence to relevant international standards and norms. Such measures included new legislation rendering child marriage illegal and making it possible for schoolgirls who became pregnant to complete their education after giving birth. Zimbabwe remained ready to share its experiences and exchange best practices with other Member States.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*