



# General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General  
2 November 2020

Original: English

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## Second Committee

### Summary record of the 4th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 9 October 2020, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Rai ..... (Nepal)

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20-13377 (E)



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

### **Statement by the President of the General Assembly**

1. **Mr. Bozkır** (Turkey), President of the General Assembly, said that the theme chosen for the current session, “Building back better after COVID-19: ensuring a more equitable global economy, inclusive societies and sustainable recovery”, was very appropriate. The world was facing the deepest global recession since the Great Depression preceding the Second World War; the broadest collapse in incomes since 1870; and approximately 100 million more people could be pushed into extreme poverty.

2. Trade and travel restrictions, and steep declines in export earnings, tourism, foreign investments and remittances, all put at risk the livelihoods of almost 1.6 billion informal workers, with small island developing States, the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries the most severely impacted. It was in that context that the international community must look to recovery as an opportunity to build back better.

3. The framework for a sustainable recovery was already in place thanks to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. He also looked forward to agreement shortly on a new global biodiversity framework.

4. The scope of the Committee’s work was immense, with everything being considered from poverty eradication to financial systems and education to food security. Crucially, its work guided the operational activities of the United Nations as they related to development and meeting the Goals. At the current session, issues such as trade, debt, information technology and inclusion all had additional meaning and urgency in the context of the coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) pandemic.

5. Against that backdrop, the world after the pandemic required a United Nations that was fit for purpose and the negotiations on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review had thus assumed an even greater significance. They must propel the international community towards the accelerated achievement of the Goals and provide high-level political guidance to the United Nations development system as countries embarked on socioeconomic recovery. The successful

conclusion of those negotiations was therefore absolutely essential.

6. The Committee must also signal the need for inclusivity in forging a global and multilateral response to the pandemic. Leaving no one behind was not only the right thing to do morally, but evidence showed that inclusion also had social and economic dividends.

7. It was also important to consider the potential of technology as an equalizing force. Currently, the digital divide in urban and rural areas, and between developed and developing countries, continued to exacerbate inequalities. There was a need to recommit to equal access to technology. That was particularly crucial for Goal 4 on quality education.

8. During the current session, he had been mandated by the General Assembly, in many cases through resolutions adopted by the Committee, to convene high-level meetings on water for sustainable development, on culture, and on middle-income countries. He had also been mandated to convene, together with the President of the Economic and Social Council, a thematic debate on the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. He would work closely with the Secretary-General on the High-level Dialogue on Energy and the world food systems summit, both to be convened in 2021. He also looked forward to supporting the forthcoming United Nations Ocean Conference. In preparing for those events, he would be guided by priorities that included supporting the United Nations reform process, aiding vulnerable groups and countries in special situations, accelerating the achievement of the Goals and addressing gender inequality.

9. He encouraged the Committee, under the guidance of the Chair, to build bridges and seek compromises in its deliberations with a view to achieving consensus. The objective of the norms developed and the mandates set was after all to improve the lives of people outside of United Nations Headquarters and to strengthen the community of nations.

### *Draft oral decision on statements delivered during the general debate*

10. **The Chair** said that, at the Committee’s 1st meeting (A/C.2/75/SR.1), he had recalled that the Committee, in approving its organization of work and bearing in mind the special circumstances under which it was meeting during the seventy-fifth session, had proposed that statements in the general debate could be delivered in person, as virtual live statements or in pre-recorded form. He had also expressed his understanding

that all statements delivered in the general debate should be treated on an equal basis. Following further consultations in that regard, he wished to propose the following oral draft decision: “The Second Committee, taking into account the particular circumstances under which the Committee is meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, decides, without setting a precedent for future sessions, that all statements delivered during the general debate of the Committee at the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly in accordance with the organization of work of the Committee (A/C.2/75/L.1) shall be reflected in the Committee’s summary records, with an annotated footnote in the case of statements made, on an exceptional basis, through pre-recorded videos.”

11. **Ms. Herity** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the text of the footnote would read as follows: “The statement made by the representative of [country x] was made through a pre-recorded video, under the extraordinary circumstances of the work of the Second Committee during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, in accordance with the approved organization of work of the Committee (A/C.2/75/L.1) and the conference room paper of the Bureau on the work of the Committee at the seventy-fifth session (A/C.2/75/CRP.2) and its reflection in summary records is solely for convenience and shall not set a precedent for any future session.”

12. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft oral decision with regard to the reflection of all statements delivered in the general debate in the summary records of the Committee.

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **Mr. Varganov** (Russian Federation) said that while his delegation had supported the oral decision in view of the special circumstances, it wished to reaffirm that the decision did not set a precedent for the future and that pre-recorded video statements should not be considered as equivalent means of delivering statements during official meetings of the Committee.

#### **General debate** (*continued*)

15. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua), speaking on behalf of the Central American Integration System (SICA), said that on 12 March 2020 the SICA member States had adopted a declaration entitled “Central America united against the coronavirus”, which included a regional contingency plan aimed at complementing national efforts to prevent, contain and treat COVID-19. The plan also sought to mitigate the

impacts of the pandemic and set out steps to promote the socioeconomic recovery of the countries in the region.

16. Resources and cooperation measures to deal with COVID-19 should not be a substitute for measures to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially resources for the eradication of poverty. The SICA member States were concerned that the impact of the pandemic had significantly aggravated the situation with regard to food and nutrition security, particularly in the context of climate change, and supported the preparations for the world food systems summit to be held in 2021 as part of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals. They were committed to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions in a balanced and comprehensive manner, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda, and sought common solutions that benefited their peoples while leaving no one behind.

17. Concerned by the lack of access to sufficient financing to meet their needs, the SICA member States were committed to promoting the use of multidimensional indicators that better reflected the complex and diverse development realities of the region. They supported South-South cooperation, including the outcome of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, and recognized the importance of increased international support for triangular cooperation, including for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Goals.

18. There was a need for a fair system of trade based on universal rules and standards that were non-discriminatory and equitable. The SICA member States recognized the value of integrating their economies, promoting public and private partnerships and developing mechanisms that substantially increased trade inside and outside their region.

19. The SICA member States were committed to the empowerment of women, gender equality and the advancement of women. Those were prerequisites for the full enjoyment by women of their fundamental freedoms and for the eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls.

20. They were also committed to implementing non-discriminatory public policies that promoted free, universal and inclusive high-quality education, the incorporation of gender and intercultural perspectives as well as respect for creative skills, ancestral knowledge and awareness of other cultures. Through the introduction of such policies everyone could develop the

capacities for critical thinking and for logical, creative and innovative reasoning.

21. As Central America was one of the regions most vulnerable to climate change, the SICA member States recognized the importance of strengthening the implementation of the Sendai Framework in order to contribute to disaster risk reduction. They also recognized the importance of continuing to promote renewable energy and clean technologies, and of advancing towards more sustainable consumption and production models that contributed to the achievement of the Goals.

22. The developed countries had a historical responsibility for contributing to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions. In keeping with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, they must fulfil their commitment to limit the global increase in temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius and ensure that developing countries had additional, predictable and sufficient financial resources in that regard. More flexible financing mechanisms were also needed to ensure that the most vulnerable countries could adapt to climate change and mitigate its negative impacts.

23. **Mr. Favre** (Switzerland) said that the vulnerability and interdependence of the world's societies had been highlighted in a striking way by COVID-19. In recent months, the United Nations system as a whole had helped to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable and to limit the socioeconomic impact of the crisis. In the fight against the pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organizations in the field of global health had played a key role.

24. The crisis could however become an opportunity for the international community to move towards a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive model of society, guided by the 2030 Agenda. As only 10 years remained to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and given the urgent global challenges affecting all countries without exception, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be accelerated.

25. The reforms launched by the Secretary-General would help the Organization to adapt to changing times. In that context, Switzerland was supporting the financing of the new resident coordinator system in the amount of 9.4 million Swiss francs. The next quadrennial comprehensive policy review would be crucial in identifying the remaining challenges, including with regard to the sustainable financing of the coordination system, and thus in ensuring the effective

implementation of the development system reforms. Switzerland was grateful for the trust placed in it to facilitate negotiations on the relevant draft resolution.

26. Switzerland was committed to a long-term, multidimensional and multi-stakeholder approach aimed at combating poverty, alleviating the suffering of civilian populations and eliminating inequalities and all kinds of discrimination while also limiting the impact of climate change and the degradation of biodiversity. Furthermore, Switzerland attached great importance to disaster risk reduction and to strengthening the link between humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peace.

27. Digitization was transforming the world and offering new opportunities to accelerate the development of societies. It had gained further importance during the period of social distancing. While digitization simplified processes and provided greater transparency, it required a more robust governance architecture that left no one behind, including on financial issues. During the current session Switzerland would therefore be hosting a new dialogue with Kenya on the governance of global digital finance. It attached great importance to the implementation both of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation and of the Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation.

28. The Committee must provide normative guidance on global sustainable development issues and related areas. It must also do its utmost to seek compromise and consensus, even though delegations might have divergent positions. Given the circumstances of the current pandemic crisis, his delegation welcomed the fact that most of the discussions in the Committee could be held virtually or in a hybrid format.

29. **Ms. Boham** (Ghana) said that the year 2020 had witnessed a devastating pandemic whose multi-dimensional impact was still reverberating around the world. While COVID-19 was a health crisis affecting the entire international community, no one could not have predicted the scope of its effect on global economic growth, political momentum and social inequality. The eradication of poverty must remain high on the Committee's agenda in order to truly leave no one behind.

30. Like other developing countries, Ghana was striving to lift its people out of poverty through the creation of a national enabling environment. However, amid rising inequalities within and among countries, the challenges continued to increase. In that context, the

current levels of financial flows fell far short of what was required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Collective efforts and partnerships were required of Governments, business leaders and the financial sector to meet the annual investment requirement of \$5 to 7 trillion for the Goals. It was also critical to scale and speed up long-term sustainable financing from both public and private domestic and international public sources. The restructuring of the global financing architecture would be more important than ever in maintaining decent standards of living and securing the economic gains already made.

31. Domestic resource mobilization would be significantly enhanced if the international community worked together to combat illicit financial flows from developing countries. Ghana supported the calls for strengthening international cooperation in tax matters, including through the creation of an inclusive global forum to deal with the challenges associated with tax evasion and illicit financial flows.

32. A fair multilateral trading system was needed that facilitated trade and provided opportunities for developing countries to broaden their export base and advance their economies. Ghana also called for the promotion of sustainable infrastructure development in developing countries, the transfer of appropriate technology and the adoption of policies and institutional frameworks that were duly supported by affordable and clean technology. There was also a crucial need to disseminate technology more widely. The digital and technological divide had been further exacerbated by school closures that had affected more than 1.5 billion children and youth globally.

33. The nexus between climate change, biodiversity and health could not be overemphasized, as the COVID-19 pandemic had amply demonstrated. A transition to sustainability required a change in the way that humans interacted with the environment and with nature. Nature-based solutions must be integrated into recovery efforts in order to achieve the green, resilient and inclusive economies necessary to build back better. The time had come to take urgent, transformative and sustainable actions designed to build resilience, ensure the integrity of ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss.

34. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to reposition the development architecture of the Organization in order to make it more fit for purpose and hoped that, through a reinvigorated resident coordinator's office, sufficient resources would be made available for the operational activities of the

Organization in developing countries. Strengthening collective action to address global challenges was the only way forward and multilateralism was therefore needed more than ever.

35. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica) said that at the start of 2020, following significant structural reforms to entrench macroeconomic stability and fiscal sustainability, Jamaica had achieved a substantial reduction in its debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio, had recorded 20 consecutive quarters of economic growth and had posted a record low unemployment rate of 7.2 percent. However, the COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated how quickly the painstaking development gains made could be upended.

36. The national economy was currently projected to contract by over 5 per cent in the current fiscal year and Jamaica was grappling with reduced government revenues, increased health, social and economic support expenditures and severe job losses in the both formal and informal sectors. The reduction of critical external flows from tourism, which had seen a decline of 86 per cent in the second quarter, had placed pressure on fiscal accounts, threatening the hard-won macroeconomic stability. Furthermore, the reduction in fiscal space had constrained the capacity to make key public investments, such as in physical infrastructure, the digital transformation of the economy and the simplification and harmonization of international trade processes. Nevertheless, in response to the pandemic, the Government had launched the COVID-19 Allocation of Resources for Employees Programme to provide temporary cash transfers that cushioned the economic impact on individuals and businesses.

37. While some countries were receiving a digital dividend, others were still suffering from the consequences of a digital divide. Developing countries should be supported in their efforts to build resilient digital infrastructure, as such public investments served as a force multiplier in narrowing the gaps that resulted in inequitable developmental outcomes.

38. In view of the crucial need for a global coordinated response to the pandemic, Jamaica, together with Canada and the Secretary-General, had recently convened the High-level Event on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond. The Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond had proposed practical yet ambitious policy options related to the COVID-19 response and recovery process that could be taken by the international community.

39. Given the liquidity crunch being experienced by many developing countries, his delegation welcomed the Debt Service Suspension Initiative of the Group of 20 (G20) and supported the calls for it to be expanded to middle-income countries and extended to 2021. Increased access to concessional low-cost financing would further ameliorate the current liquidity crisis in developing countries.

40. His delegation supported the proposal of the Alliance of Small Island States to establish a compact to deliver debt relief and increase resilience financing for small island developing States. It also saw merit in the calls to establish a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructuring. Countries that were afforded an opportunity to undertake orderly debt workout arrangements with their creditors stood the best chance of stabilizing their economies and regaining macroeconomic balance, thereby providing a platform for economic growth.

41. Important and appropriate measures that could be taken to complement national efforts to respond to COVID-19 included increased access to international development finance, the issuance and reallocation of special drawing rights and the establishment of special funds. The proposal by Costa Rica to establish the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics also deserved serious consideration. The Fund would not only address the current liquidity challenges of developing countries and middle-income countries, but also their long-term sustainable development needs. His delegation was also interested in the proposal by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to establish a resilience fund as a high-powered financing vehicle to attract large-scale funding to build Caribbean resilience. The international community must mobilize the resources required to provide short-term emergency relief, stimulate recovery efforts over the medium-term and invest in long-term resilience building.

42. **Mr. Naemi** (Afghanistan) said that COVID-19 had exacerbated existing challenges and was introducing new obstacles and threatening decades of development. It was having a devastating impact on his country's ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 1 on ending poverty. According to a recent report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the poverty rate in Afghanistan was expected to surge from 55 percent to 68 percent as a result of the pandemic.

43. His delegation was therefore proud, together with the delegation of Croatia, to have jointly coordinated the

negotiations on the draft omnibus resolution on a comprehensive and coordinated response to the pandemic, adopted on 11 September 2020. The Main Committees of the General Assembly must now build upon that common normative framework and operationalize the joint commitments made therein.

44. As a least developed country, a landlocked developing country and a conflict-affected State, Afghanistan faced immense challenges. The pandemic had exacerbated those challenges still further and Afghanistan would not achieve the Goals without additional global support and regional cooperation. At the same time, his Government was pursuing several important initiatives and policies, guided by the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework, which was fully aligned with the Goals and other development agendas.

45. **Mr. Uzunovski** (North Macedonia) said that the COVID-19 pandemic was having a devastating impact on the health sector and its unprecedented global economic and social impacts went beyond anything that could have been predicted. Poverty, unemployment, hunger and debt all continued to rise at alarming rates, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable groups. In that context, the Committee's work during the current session would be more important than ever in the quest for ambitious international financial reforms and collective action on sustainable development. The world needed a stronger, more action-oriented United Nations capable of fulfilling its central role in global economic governance.

46. His Government remained fully committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as it had demonstrated during the presentation of the country's first voluntary national review of the Sustainable Development Goals at the 2020 high-level political forum on sustainable development. During the review, the Government had outlined its priority goals for the period 2018–2020, namely: to end poverty; to promote economic growth and decent work for all; to combat climate change; and to achieve, in particular, Goal 4 on education and Goal 16 on just, peaceful and inclusive societies. Tangible progress had already been made in reducing poverty and combating inequality and social exclusion.

47. Poverty could only be eradicated through systematic reforms designed to provide equal opportunities to all, particularly those left on the margins of society. Before the COVID-19 crisis, his country had recorded its lowest ever unemployment rate

of 16.6 per cent. The social protection system in his country had now been completely reformed and priority continued to be given to investment in quality education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

48. Gender equality was fundamental for any democratic, socially just society and North Macedonia remained a steadfast champion of women's empowerment that enabled equal rights and liberties for all women. The Government was continuing to create policies that integrated equality and non-discrimination in all aspects of society, particularly in the areas of education, health, social protection and labour relations. It had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, had established a national coordination body for non-discrimination and equality, and had also adopted new anti-discrimination laws. The international community must continue its efforts to reduce gender inequality, remove gender pay gaps and protect women and girls from the widespread violence against them.

49. His Government placed a special emphasis on providing support to young people and was endeavouring to include them in all processes of society. Indeed, Northern Macedonia was the only non-European Union country that was implementing the European Union's Youth Guarantee schemes as part of a campaign to end the brain drain and ensure that all young people had an equal chance of success. To that end, the Government had increased the investment of resources in their education and future employment prospects.

50. Climate change remained a pressing global challenge. It was imperative for economic and technological development to become climate neutral and to focus on developing and supporting innovative environmental approaches and sustainable development strategies. North Macedonia was committed to reducing its emissions from fossil fuels by as much as 36 per cent by 2030 and was continuing to take measures to produce clean, affordable and secure energy, including through the increased use of solar energy.

51. The Committee should be a starting point for effectively addressing global challenges and making progress toward sustainable development. It was crucial to demonstrate political will and effective multilateralism in order to successfully advance the 2030 Agenda.

52. **Ms. Squeff** (Argentina) said that while the year 2020 had presented unimaginable challenges that had tested the resilience of humanity, multilateral solutions could be found to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In that context, the Committee's work was increasingly relevant. Resources were needed to combat COVID-19 and to overcome it programmes must be developed that were guided by the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

53. During the high-level political forum in July 2020, Argentina had presented its second voluntary national review of the Goals and had outlined the main achievements and challenges faced in implementing the 2030 Agenda. It was undeniable that the pandemic had caused setbacks in achieving sustainable development and had negatively impacted the 17 Goals. The pandemic had also reasserted the central role of science, technology and innovation, both to overcome the current situation and to achieve sustainable development. All countries, regardless of their level of development, must prioritize and allocate resources, within their means, to science. They must also implement policies for gender equality in order to reduce the existing gaps.

54. The strengthening of South-South and triangular cooperation could contribute to building capacities, reducing inequalities and respecting local specificities. Nevertheless, South-South cooperation was not a replacement for North-South cooperation and it did not have the capacity to deal with all the challenges presented by the pandemic. In that context, her delegation reaffirmed the outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. The Conference had made it possible to identify tools to promote South-South cooperation. Argentina was grateful to the Latin American and Caribbean Group for its endorsement of Argentina to assume the presidency of the next session of the United Nations High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, which would follow up on the outcomes agreed upon at the Conference.

55. All developing countries and middle-income countries had been affected by the current economic crisis, which showed that the current per capita income level indicator did not adequately reflect levels of national development. Progress should therefore be made in the use of multidimensional measurements to define the eligibility criteria for access to concessional financing and international cooperation.

56. Argentina advocated finding a way for greater global liquidity, especially in view of the scarcity of

resources in emerging countries, which were also those that had suffered the most from the impact of COVID-19. At the same time, the crisis was no longer only one of liquidity, but in certain cases it was also one of insolvency, and in that context a debt moratorium would not be sufficient. Argentina urged the international community to continue to seek new multilateral alternatives that facilitated the orderly restructuring of debts and ensured the greatest availability of resources for the implementation of public policies to address the pandemic and sustain inclusive growth.

57. Argentina reaffirmed its commitment to the 8.7 Alliance, which sought to eliminate all forms of modern slavery and ensure decent employment for all. It also congratulated the 186 countries that had ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). The universal ratification of the Convention in August 2020 reflected the global commitment to eradicating the worst forms of child labour, including slavery, sexual exploitation and the use of children in armed conflict or other illegal or dangerous work. Furthermore, at the initiative of Argentina, the General Assembly had declared 2021 as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. Her delegation called upon all countries to work together to eradicate that scourge.

58. Lastly, Argentina was working with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to enhance the role of education and to share experiences so that countries could achieve Goal 4. In particular, measures should be taken to ensure high-quality universal education and access for all to the Internet.

59. **Mr. Varganov** (Russian Federation) said that the Committee's current session was being held under difficult conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee would need to develop effective, realistic and consensus-based solutions to put the world community back on the right track for sustainable development.

60. Against the backdrop of increased uncertainty in the global economy and other problems related to financial and commodity market volatility, widening inequalities between and within countries and regions, increased sovereign debt and growing poverty, special attention should be given to the implementation of 2030 Agenda. The global challenge of eradicating poverty in all its forms was particularly pressing and the success of international efforts on that front was inextricably

linked to the achievement of such goals as food security and universal health coverage.

61. In early August 2020, the Russian Federation had officially registered the world's first coronavirus vaccine, Sputnik V, which had proven to be highly effective and safe. His country was ready to cooperate with all interested partners at the international level to ensure global coordinated efforts to combat COVID-19.

62. However, the measures being considered to combat the pandemic should not be held hostage to a green recovery that favoured ideas of trade and climate protectionism under the guise of caring for the health of the planet. Furthermore, recovery measures should not lead to competition but rather to unity and should be based on the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainability. It was important to address climate change issues within the relevant platforms, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. Priority should be given to ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy sources for all and to increasing the use of various types of fuels and technologies. A meeting of G20 energy ministers had recently confirmed that approach. In that regard, natural gas and nuclear power, as cleaner energy sources, had significant potential to meet the world's increasing energy demand as economies recovered from the pandemic.

63. The Russian Federation opposed unilateral approaches and protectionism in international trade and the proliferation of unilateral sanctions regimes that bypassed the Security Council. Countries dependent on imported food and medicine had been particularly affected by those policies. In that regard, his delegation wished to emphasize the urgency of implementing President Putin's initiative for the creation of "green corridors" that were free of trade wars and sanctions, especially for the essential goods, foodstuffs, medicines and personal protective equipment that were in demand in the fight against the pandemic.

64. Owing to the constraints during the pandemic, information and communications technology had become an important factor in the medical, agricultural and other sectors. His delegation welcomed the active role of the United Nations in discussing the social and economic aspects of the digital agenda. That work should be based on a consensus approach endorsed by Member States. The road map proposed by the Secretary-General in that area still required thorough discussion.



65. The Russian Federation shared the view of a growing number of countries on the need for early reform of the world financial system by increasing the stake of major emerging economies in the quotas and governance instruments of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It also noted with satisfaction the accelerated work on reform of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which had been delayed since 2018 and was an important mechanism for maintaining and strengthening universal, open, non-discriminatory and fair trade.

66. In the context of regional integration associations, the Russian Federation advocated harnessing the joint capacities of the Eurasian Economic Community, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other regional projects in order to achieve a transition to higher-quality integrative growth within the framework of the Greater Eurasian Partnership.

67. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review was the basis for the Organization's development activities. Operational activities for development were more important than ever in the recovery from the current crisis.

68. The Russian Federation was a traditional and reliable participant in global development efforts. It was ready to work together and constructively with all stakeholders to develop effective and realistic measures for global sustainable development and prosperity based on the principles of multilateralism and solidarity.

69. **Mr. Ishikane** (Japan) said that the spread of COVID-19 was a serious human security crisis that posed a threat to the survival, livelihoods and dignity of people. In addition to the need for an immediate response to protect lives during the pandemic, there was also a need to minimize its social and economic impacts. Inclusive measures that focused on protecting and empowering every individual were necessary so that the most vulnerable people, including women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and those affected by calamities such as armed conflict, would not be left behind.

70. Based on the concept of human security, Japan had provided over \$1.54 billion for medical and health assistance to developing countries since the outbreak of COVID-19 and was also providing up to \$4.5 billion in concessional loans to help revitalize their economies. Building on that concept, Japan wished to deepen the discussions in the United Nations on achieving the

Sustainable Development Goals and tackling global issues in the era of COVID-19 and beyond.

71. What ultimately mattered was to deliver to those in need on the ground. Programme budgets needed to be scrutinized so that more resources were directed to delivery and not for administration. Those were among the basic principles that should guide the consideration of the Committee's important agenda ideas, including with regard to the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

72. In the face of the pandemic there was a more pressing need than ever to achieve universal health coverage and ensure equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. Japan hoped to advance the discussions on how to implement the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage, whereby Heads of State and Government had committed to realizing universal health coverage by 2030. In that context, Japan welcomed the Secretary-General's recently issued policy brief on COVID-19 and universal health coverage.

73. Japan was focused on mainstreaming disaster risk reduction throughout the sustainable development agenda, since disasters could nullify years of gains in an instant, particularly when countries were ill-prepared. Japan would continue to support developing countries in implementing the Sendai Framework, from which the concept of building back better had originated.

74. Climate change was another persistent threat to human security. The international community needed to cooperate to realize a virtuous cycle of environment and growth. Japan had therefore hosted a virtual ministerial meeting with other countries on 3 September 2020 to discuss climate change and environmental protection in the context of the post-COVID-19 recovery.

75. As the co-lead of one of the discussion group, Japan had contributed to the outcome of the High-level Meeting on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond. The Committee should further deepen the discussions on how to enhance the transparency of the flow of public finance and mobilize private resources to build back better from the ongoing crisis.

76. The launch of the Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation marked an important turning point in promoting human-centred digital transformation. Japan would continue to contribute to inclusive and credible discussions on science,

technology and innovation in support of achieving the Goals.

77. **Ms. Alnuaimi** (United Arab Emirates), in a pre-recorded video statement,\* said that successfully dealing with new technologies meant successfully dealing with the future. The COVID-19 pandemic had confirmed the importance of technological development in various fields, especially digital cooperation at the international level. In that context, the United Arab Emirates had contributed to the digital cooperation architecture recommendations in the report of Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation and had presented a paper on the future of global digital cooperation to the Secretary-General.

78. COVID-19 had negatively impacted the ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In response, the United Arab Emirates had become one of the leading countries providing medical aid to countries around the world. It had provided more than 1,500 tons of medical aid to 118 countries, which had helped about 1.5 million health workers around the world during the pandemic. In 2019, total aid from the United Arab Emirates had amounted to nearly \$8 billion, of which 91 per cent had been directed towards development. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development had ranked the United Arab Emirates as the largest donor of foreign aid, relative to its gross national income, for four consecutive years.

79. As part of the national energy strategy for the period up to 2050, the country's first nuclear power plant unit had become operational in August 2020. The Barakah nuclear power plant would assume a fundamental role in diversifying energy sources and in reducing the country's carbon footprint. When fully operational, it was expected to limit national carbon emissions by 21 million tons annually.

80. The United Arab Emirates was strongly committed to enhancing energy security in small island developing States. The United Arab Emirates-Caribbean Renewable Energy Partnership Fund and the United Arab Emirates-Pacific Partnership Fund had both been launched in

\* The statement made by the representative of the United Arab Emirates was made through a pre-recorded video, under the extraordinary circumstances of the work of the Second Committee during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, in accordance with the approved organization of work of the Committee (A/C.2/75/L.1) and the conference room paper of the Bureau on the work of the Committee at the seventy-fifth session (A/C.2/75/CRP.2) and its reflection in summary records is solely for convenience and shall not set a precedent for any future session.

2013. Each fund had a budget of \$50 million that was provided in the form of grants for renewable energy projects.

81. The United Arab Emirates was committed to promoting biodiversity, including through an initiative that had been launched at the national level to ensure the sustainability of wildlife and to increase public awareness of biodiversity issues. It was also striving to achieve relevant international goals, such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

82. Lastly, the United Arab Emirates was committed to developing sustainable food systems to ensure sustainable development. By launching the National Food Security Strategy 2051, her country aimed to develop sustainable food production and implement flexible agricultural practices that increased productivity and helped to preserve ecosystems. The world food systems summit to be held in 2021 was an opportunity to accelerate the development of sustainable food systems and to collectively contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. As a member of the summit's advisory committee, the United Arab Emirates would work tirelessly towards a successful summit and would put forward clear steps to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

83. **Mr. Espinosa Cañizares** (Ecuador) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated existing challenges and had created new vulnerabilities, reversing the progress achieved over many years on the three pillars of sustainable development. Among the developing countries most affected by the pandemic, medium-income countries were confronting such challenges as weak health-care systems, high levels of debt and limited fiscal space. They required international support and solidarity, equitable access to medical supplies, medicines and future vaccines against COVID-19. Above all, those countries needed to be considered eligible to receive humanitarian assistance, funds and programmes in order to recover from the pandemic. To that end, multidimensional measurements that went beyond income must be used.

84. While Ecuador would seek to recover from the global crisis through measures that promoted sustainable and inclusive growth, it stressed the need to continue to prioritize the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda would require strong partnerships at all levels, including the effective engagement of the private sector, civil society and academia.

85. Ecuador had presented its second voluntary national review of the Sustainable Development Goals at the high-level political forum in 2020. During the high-level week of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly Ecuador had also participated at the highest level in the events related to the Goals, financing for development and biodiversity.

86. The current circumstances required the flexibility of all members for the sake of their health and safety. While virtual meetings allowed delegates to continue their deliberations, the updates to resolutions during the current session would be largely procedural. However, that did not mean that there should be any less determination to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and to implement the agreements reached.

87. **Mr. Monyane** (Lesotho) said that COVID-19 required special attention by the international community and the United Nations system as its unprecedented health and socioeconomic impacts had derailed the progress made towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The pandemic had further exacerbated inequalities amongst nations, placing the most vulnerable, such as Lesotho, at the greatest risk of being left behind. Development partners must take concrete steps to meet their official development assistance (ODA) targets in order for vulnerable countries to be able to invest in health, education, the economy and social safety nets. The international financial institutions must also prioritize the financing of resilience projects in vulnerable countries to ensure that those most at risk were protected.

88. Recent reports revealed that global merchandise trade was set to plummet in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. The least developed countries such as Lesotho would be threatened by that situation, owing to their dependence on trade as a driver of economic growth. The impact would be most felt in the garments and textile industry, his country's biggest employer, which was currently undergoing massive retrenchments. Unfortunately, women would be the most affected, thereby further widening inequalities within society. Lesotho called upon the international community, the United Nations system and international financial institutions to support vulnerable countries in their efforts to achieve a sustainable socioeconomic recovery.

89. Climate change impacts were accelerating and becoming more adverse across the globe. Severe climatic conditions characterized by heavy storms,

droughts and raging fires had become the norm. Lesotho, for example, was suffering from recurrent droughts, irregular rainfall and destructive storms. Soil erosion and soil nutrient depletion had also accelerated, leading to reduced crop yields that affected the livelihoods of a vast majority of the population dependent on subsistence agriculture. As a result, Lesotho was falling even further behind in achieving the 2030 Agenda because of the role played by agriculture in ending poverty and hunger. However, in its quest to strengthen resilience, Lesotho was undertaking significant measures to build a green, low carbon and climate resilient economy. The topography of Lesotho enabled it to have a high potential for clean energy development in renewable energy.

90. **Mr. Maung** (Myanmar) said that the COVID-19 pandemic was a human and socioeconomic crisis. Although the world had made tremendous efforts to combat COVID-19, more needed to be done to effectively contain and reduce the spread of the virus. A unified global response was needed to build back, and the 2030 Agenda should be the collective road map for a more sustainable future.

91. The world had not been on track to fully achieve the Sustainable Development Goals even before the pandemic had arrived. The actions of the international community in the coming years would therefore be critical to accelerating efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. His country's firm commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda was reflected in the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan. Myanmar would present its first voluntary national review of the Goals at the 2021 high-level political forum.

92. Myanmar had taken a "whole of nation" approach at the early stages of the spread of COVID-19, which had been reasonably contained during the first wave. However, the country was now experiencing a powerful second wave that had claimed over 500 lives. At the same time, the pandemic had disrupted tourism, the manufacturing sector and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, which were all key engines of growth. The GDP growth rate had thus fallen from 6.8 per cent in 2019 to 1.8 per cent in 2020. To address that situation the Government was implementing the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan and had established a COVID-19 fund to assist the affected sectors in the country.

93. No sustainable development could be achieved without peace and there could be no peace without sustainable development. As Myanmar had suffered from decades of internal armed conflict, the

Government's top priority remained national reconciliation and the realization of long-lasting peace. To that end, it had successfully convened four sessions of the Union Peace Conference. The third part of the Union Peace Accord had been signed during the last session, held in August 2020, and that represented a crucial step for establishing a democratic federal union. The Government was determined to resolve the remaining differences in a spirit of national unity and solidarity.

94. Myanmar had been widely recognized as one of the three countries most affected by climate change over the period 1999–2018. The Government had therefore adopted a climate change policy, strategy and master plan in June 2019 in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

95. Myanmar reaffirmed its commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism. It recognized the central role of the United Nations system in catalysing and coordinating a global response to the COVID-19 pandemic based on unity and solidarity and wished to join other Member States in underscoring the importance of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, which would be the guiding principle for the United Nations development system in helping countries to build back better.

96. It was encouraging that many of the least developed countries, including Myanmar, were on track to graduate from that category of countries. However, as those graduating countries had been significantly impacted by COVID-19, his delegation called upon the international community to scale up its support, including in the form of ODA.

97. **Ms. Rivera Sánchez** (El Salvador) said that the Committee's deliberations during the current session were particularly important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was more necessary than ever to accelerate international efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. The response to COVID-19 must be based on those three pillars in order to ensure a resilient and sustainable recovery.

98. Despite that fact that the impact of COVID-19 had paralysed the economies of countries around the world without distinction, international assistance to developing countries continued to be based on the obsolete criterion of income per capita and to ignore other more relevant indicators. Her delegation therefore urged the United Nations system, in consultation with the international financial institutions, to develop more

transparent ways to measure progress on sustainable development. Such measurements should recognize poverty in all its forms and dimensions, incorporate the social, economic and environmental aspects of national realities and take into account structural deficiencies at every level.

99. El Salvador was in favour of alternative financing mechanisms that supported South-South cooperation initiatives at the intraregional level. It also recognized the importance of increasing international support to triangular cooperation, including for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

100. Recognizing that the Central American region was extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, El Salvador stressed the importance for the international community to accelerate the implementation of the Sendai Framework, fulfil the commitments made under the Paris Agreement and provide the financial and technological support necessary for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. For its part, El Salvador was promoting an important regional initiative to improve the use of agricultural land and to prevent biodiversity loss. It was also supporting efforts to achieve zero hunger, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable groups. Furthermore, El Salvador reiterated its commitment to sustainable urban development and, in that context, stressed the importance of supporting the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

101. **Ms. Norman-Chalet** (United States of America) said that there was no question that the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the biggest challenges that had been faced since the creation of the United Nations. Before addressing those challenges, however, she first wished to congratulate the World Food Programme (WFP) on recently becoming the recipient of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize. WFP had assisted nearly 100 million women, children and men in 2019, and its operations had long been a model for the humanitarian community. WFP was often the first agency to arrive in conflict-torn communities or to assist those devastated by natural disaster, and it stayed until those communities had the capacity and resilience to feed themselves. The recent vicious attack on a WFP caravan in South Sudan served as a reminder that the brave workers on the front lines deserved the praise and recognition shown by the Nobel Committee. Since WFP had been established, the United States had been its most stalwart supporter. In recent years, that support had exceeded 40 per cent of total WFP resources. The United States was proud to provide

those in crisis with the help they needed to pursue a more secure future.

102. The United States was also leading the global response to the pandemic. As the largest bilateral donor of humanitarian and health assistance, the United States remained committed in its support for developing countries. It had allocated \$20.5 billion in foreign assistance to combat the pandemic, building on decades of investment in life-saving global health and humanitarian assistance.

103. The pandemic had caused an unprecedented global economic crisis. Nothing less than a judicious and holistic response was required based on sound policy, good governance, transparency and the rule of law. Those principles were fundamental for instilling confidence in all levels of the economy and enabling the private sector to drive a sustainable economic recovery.

104. A critical short-term step was to fully implement the Debt Service Suspension Initiative and to extend the Initiative into 2021. The United States was continuing to implement the Initiative across all its export credit and development finance agencies and had already deferred approximately \$150 million in eligible debt service payments from the most vulnerable countries. All members of G20 and the Paris Club of Industrial Country Creditors should do the same in a fully transparent manner. It was regrettable that some countries continued to classify large State-owned, Government-controlled financial institutions as commercial lenders and not as official bilateral creditors, thereby reducing the impact of the Initiative for developing countries.

105. The world needed more inclusive economies. According to United States experts, annual global GDP could increase by as much as \$7.7 trillion if countries undertook legal reforms to increase women's ability to access institutions, build credit, own and manage property, travel freely and work in the same jobs and sectors as men. The United States was also leading in that respect through the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative. A more resilient recovery meant that women had the power to fulfil their true potential.

106. To work towards achieving a more resilient recovery, the international community must focus on private sector-led solutions to the crisis. Since the start of the pandemic, the United States International Development Finance Corporation had approved \$4.6 billion in new investments. Such financing would catalyse investments aimed at stabilizing communities

across the world and preparing them to thrive in the years ahead. As part of its efforts to fill the gap in infrastructure investment, the United States was working with other countries and partners to ensure that development projects and finance adhered to international standards and best practices. Transparency and accountability were prerequisites for good governance and fostered a resilient, robust and lasting recovery.

107. During the current time of crisis, it was imperative that the integrity of the United Nations be upheld. The United Nations must therefore respect the independent mandates of other established processes, frameworks and institutions. To do otherwise would strain the limited resources and focus of the United Nations and diminishes its effectiveness. Similarly, United Nations resolutions and agencies should uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, promote well-defined consensus language and reflect the interests of all Member States. The sound functioning, credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations were all at stake.

108. **Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that COVID-19 could not be defeated as an international crisis without all countries working together in a spirit of multilateralism, cooperation and solidarity. The virus not only threatened the life and well-being of people across the globe, it also increased the poverty, hunger and inequalities that existed between and among countries. Ultimately, the virus had dealt a destructive blow to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. To tackle the crisis, a global response was needed and multilateral action was essential. However, the unjust, self-serving and unilateral approaches adopted by a few countries seeking to impose unilateral coercive measures were undermining and threatening multilateralism when it was needed the most.

109. The recent blows dealt to multilateralism had generated huge challenges for both financing and development. The protectionist and embargo policies imposed by some major players had cast doubt on the effectiveness of multilateral financing and trading systems. The international community should therefore ensure that financing for development in no way became hostage to coercive and restrictive agendas.

110. Despite such constraints, including those arising from the unjustifiable and unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and its imposition of illegal sanctions, the

Islamic Republic of Iran was working to scale up its efforts to build a more prosperous and sustainable future for its people. As a result, his country ranked fifty-sixth among 166 countries in the Sustainable Development Goals Index, which confirmed the extent of its achievements. It had achieved notable success in providing universal free public education up to the secondary school level. The national literacy rate, for example, was currently above 97 per cent of the population.

111. Regarding the participation of women in the country's social and economic sectors, currently 27 per cent of faculty members, more than 50 per cent of college students and almost 37 per cent of medical doctors were women. At the decision-making level, there had been a 60 per cent increase in women's appointments to careers as doctors.

112. As far as climate change mitigation and adaptation was concerned, the illegitimate unilateral sanctions imposed on his country had unfortunately left it no access to the means of implementation for climate action. Nevertheless, the strategy of a low carbon economy was an area where Iran had made significant strides in transforming to a low carbon economy.

113. Iran was committed to combating natural disasters and played a notable role in helping vulnerable countries to increase their resilience. In that connection, Iran hosted the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management and voluntarily funded its activities. It had put in place a comprehensive national plan to deal not only with desertification and drought but also to address the harmful effects of sand and dust storms. The United Nations development system could provide assistance in reaching out to other countries in the region to synergize those efforts, including through the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms.

114. The imposition of unilateral coercive measures was an open assault on multilateralism and efforts to achieve the Goals. Such measures were designed and executed to deny nations their inherent human rights, in particular the right to development. They also deprived Governments of the necessary means for achieving sustainable development and hindered international cooperation as well as friendly relations among nations. As an unprecedented global public health crisis continued to ravage communities throughout the world, unilateral coercive measures, including measures in the form of illegal extraterritorial sanctions, were paralysing national health-care systems and infringing

the abilities of the affected Governments to deliver the essential requirements needed to respond to the consequences of the pandemic. Therefore, as long as illegal unilateral sanctions continued to be enforced around the world, tens of millions of people would be left behind. That clearly defied the promise made in the 2030 Agenda. The immediate removal of such unlawful measures was therefore essential for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

115. **Mr. Lam Padilla** (Guatemala) said that the international crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had clearly demonstrated not only the interdependence of all countries but also how interconnected the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development were. His delegation welcomed the valuable opportunity provided by the Committee's current session to discuss the urgent recovery measures that could bring about a more equitable and inclusive global economy and lead to a sustainable recovery. The global mobilization in response to COVID-19 and the holding of various high-level summits and dialogues to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations had demonstrated the commitment of countries to multilateralism and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and targets agreed by the international community.

116. Transforming the international system meant increasing dialogue and, above all, actions designed to make international trade and the international financial system fairer, ensure that external debt was sustainable in the era of COVID-19 and beyond, promote international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows and invest in sustainable development, entrepreneurship, tourism, sustainable urban development and financing for development. To that end, it was essential to step up efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, particularly by mobilizing the four sources of financing identified in the seven main action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

117. Guatemala had made significant progress in integrating the Goals into its national development plan for the period up to 2032. The national development priorities had been clearly set out in the plan, which aimed to move from cooperation to investments that would enable Guatemala to bridge its own development gaps. Nutrition was a high priority for Guatemala, particularly for the country's poorest and most marginalized people. A national campaign was therefore under way to increase nutritional quality. His delegation also attached great importance to the draft resolution on

agricultural development, food security and nutrition to be considered at the current session, particularly in the context of the preparations for the world food systems summit in 2021.

118. At the current session, the Committee would also consider a draft resolution on international migration and development. In that context, his delegation wished to reaffirm the global calls to achieve the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, while also respecting human rights, especially the fundamental rights of children.

119. The consideration of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review at the current session should focus on the achievement of the globally agreed goals. To that end, it was important to continue to strengthen the United Nations development system.

120. Lastly, his delegation wished to stress that Guatemala was one of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Unless the environment was respected and biodiversity and ecosystems protected then all other efforts would be in vain.

121. **Ms. Hussain** (Maldives) said that amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the greatest global challenges in recent history, the international community must redouble its efforts to implement the SIDS Accelerate Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Samoa Pathway), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework, among other key multilateral agreements. Moreover, the Samoa Pathway should be placed at the centre of the Committee's discussions. One year from the mid-term review of the Samoa Pathway, there was still much work to be done in order to fulfil the commitments undertaken.

122. Maldives had taken the unprecedented step of closing its international borders in late March 2020, effectively shutting down its tourism industry, which accounted for around 25 per cent of its GDP. Despite such challenges, the Government had taken numerous steps to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic on people. Early action included the introduction of stimulus packages for businesses, subsidies on utility bills and price controls on essential products. The Government had also embarked on an ambitious recovery plan that aimed to build a more resilient Maldives that would bring it closer to realizing the 2030 Agenda.

123. Her delegation welcomed the recent discussions on financing the 2030 Agenda in the era of COVID-19 and beyond. Maldives had joined other small and

vulnerable countries in calling for simplified and alternative financing options and the introduction of mechanisms for credit guarantee schemes that would help to reduce the cost of borrowing. It also called upon the international financial institutions to provide flexibility in lending instruments to reflect the current reality. The pandemic presented the world with a unique opportunity to strengthen cooperation and solidarity in accordance with the spirit of the United Nations. The people of her country saw the United Nations as a critical platform to build a better world.

124. The unique vulnerability of Maldives and other small island developing States to climate change meant that years of hard-earned economic growth and social progress could be undone by a single natural disaster. As countries sought to build back better after COVID-19, the recovery should be driven by efforts to combat climate change and protect biodiversity. Her Government was taking concrete steps to achieve environment-related targets in a number of areas. Over the past 18 months, for example, it had achieved 35 per cent of the pledge to protect one reef, one island and one mangrove in each of the 20 atolls of Maldives by 2023. It had also adopted a target to protect 10 per cent of coral reefs and 20 per cent of mangroves by 2025.

125. As climate change knew no borders, domestic policies alone were insufficient and collective actions must be accelerated, including stronger nationally determined contributions by all countries to reduce their emissions in order to keep global temperatures well below 1.5 degrees Celsius. The international community must also accelerate actions to follow up on the mitigation and climate finance commitments made under the Paris Agreement, take meaningful action to protect the ocean from harmful plastic pollution and take tangible steps to strengthen disaster risk reduction, as agreed under the Sendai Framework.

126. **Ms. Pejanović Đurišić** (Montenegro) said that the theme of building back better clearly reaffirmed the long-standing need to transition to a more inclusive and sustainable economic model, which was the only way to reverse the negative trends undermining the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As many delegations had repeatedly emphasized during the general debates in previous years, the Committee should play an important role in supporting accelerated action by Member States to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. The urgency of pursuing common goals had been intensified by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

127. While Montenegro had been among the first countries not only to have incorporated the Goals into its national development strategy but also to have presented a voluntary national review in 2016, the COVID-19 pandemic was severely undermining its ongoing efforts to achieve the Goals. The crisis has acted as a catalyst of change, however, by promoting the application of digital technologies in new settings, such as learning from home for school children, e-commerce platforms for small farmers and the use of an e-social card system to provide financial support to the poorest members of society. Recognizing the significant economic and social potential of digitalization to enhance work on sustainable development priorities, Montenegro had supported the Global Declaration on the Digital Response to COVID-19.

128. It was more critical than ever critical to promote policies for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls with a view to achieving the Goals. In that respect, work was well under way to implement the action plan on the Strategy for Developing Women's Entrepreneurship in Montenegro (2015–2020), which focused in particular on women in rural areas and marginalized groups.

129. Another important aspect for building back better was focusing on youth policies and education. The Youth Strategy 2017–2021 prioritized measures designed to improve access for young people to employment, quality education and decision-making processes.

130. Implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving the Goals remained crucial to the recovery from the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, further decisive steps must be taken in the process of revitalizing and modernizing the Committee's agenda. The consideration of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review was also an opportunity to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to effectively respond to the crisis.

131. **Mr. Aidid** (Malaysia) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had caused great disruption to the world. IMF projected that the global economy would contract by 3 per cent in 2020, much worse than during the 2008–2009 financial crisis. A quicker global economic recovery would only be possible with a free and fair multilateral trading architecture. In that context, Malaysia welcomed the ongoing efforts to revitalize WTO.

132. Domestically, Malaysia had put in place structural economic reforms to address the negative impact of

COVID-19. It had begun the implementation of economic recovery strategies, followed by an all-inclusive economic revitalization programme. Malaysia would continue to seek improved market access for its goods and services while attracting foreign direct investments to reboot and sustain its economy. It was imperative for the United Nations system to remain at the centre of the global economic governance structure in achieving sustainable, equitable and inclusive growth.

133. The COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and had reversed decades of gains made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Malaysia therefore continued to support accelerated actions and transformative pathways to achieve the Goals, which had been embedded into its five-year national development plans. It also remained steadfast in mobilizing efforts to help other countries end all forms of poverty, combat inequalities, tackle climate change and negate the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the South-South cooperation to ensure that no one was left behind.

134. The pandemic must be treated as a turning point and an opportunity for the entire international community to reflect on its relationships with nature. In that respect, Malaysia remained unswerving in its commitments to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, protect natural habitats and pursue sustainable practices. To date, Malaysia had reduced the carbon emission intensity of its GDP to 33 per cent.

135. The development plans of Malaysia remained geared towards sustainability. The Government was committed to producing sustainable palm oil, including by making sustainable certification mandatory. Furthermore, over 60 national laws and regulations were in place covering the protection of wildlife and the environment, the health, safety and welfare of workers and the control of pollutants. For example, Malaysia had managed to retain 55 per cent of its rainforests, exceeding 5 per cent of the commitment made in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It also had one of the oldest rainforests in the world, the Royal Belum, which was estimated to be over 130 million years old. Nearly 13,000 orangutans lived in protected forests in Sabah and Sarawak, and about 55 years earlier Malaysia had established the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, a worldwide leader in orangutan care.



136. Support from the United Nations development system would be important in addressing the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19. The quadrennial comprehensive policy view provided a critical opportunity to guide the system to help Member States build back better and accelerate actions towards more sustainable, resilient and inclusive development aligned with the 2030 Agenda. His delegation looked forward to the negotiations on the policy review during the current session.

137. **Mr. Tiare** (Burkina Faso) said that his delegation welcomed all the initiatives currently under way to promote financing for development in the era of COVID-19 and beyond. The various international instruments already in place could also help to accelerate a more inclusive and resilient recovery. However, building back better also required the international community to address the problem of debt in developing countries, including through debt cancellation.

138. Since 2016, the commitment of Burkina Faso to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals could be seen in the implementation of its national social and economic development plan. Unfortunately, since that time the country had also faced extremely violent terrorist attacks that had displaced thousands of people and had caused an acute humanitarian crisis.

139. Despite the difficult ongoing security situation, positive results had been achieved with the support of technical and financial partners. For example, investments in agricultural production and mining in Burkina Faso had increased in 2019, but poverty had not been eliminated completely and many challenges remained. Between 2015 and 2019, the proportion of the population vulnerable to food insecurity had fallen from 14.5 per cent to 10 per cent and the prevalence of underweight children below 5 years of age had continued to fall since 2015. However, adequate nutrition and food security for the entire population would require higher levels of food production. The success of future development measures would largely depend on an improved security situation inside the country.

140. The Government was continuing to strengthen its policy of providing free health care to women and for children under 5 years of age. Rates of maternal and child mortality had declined since 2015 thanks to their improved access to health-care services. Progress had also been made in the enrolment of boys and girls in schools. The Government attached particular

importance to the education of internally displaced children and had recently launched a national education strategy in that regard.

141. The grave security situation in Burkina Faso and the spread of COVID-19 were having a range of negative socioeconomic impacts on the population of Burkina Faso and on the national economy, including a fall in economic growth from 6.3 per cent to 2 per cent and a current budget deficit of 5 per cent. In response, the Government was implementing a national economic recovery package to help businesses deal with the consequences of the pandemic. His delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General for his call for international solidarity in combating COVID-19 and looked forward to the various multilateral initiatives to be discussed at the current session.

142. **Ms. Andriamiarisoa** (Madagascar) said that the revitalization of the Committee's work was more crucial than ever. The Committee deserved to be strengthened so that it could not only consider the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 but also contribute to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

143. Her country remained committed to the principles set out in the 2030 Agenda and to the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, including in the context of the membership of Madagascar of the Economic and Social Council for the period 2021–2023. Madagascar intended to present its second voluntary national review of the Goals during the high-level political forum in 2021.

144. The pandemic should not lead countries to deviate from the objectives that they had set for themselves. On the contrary, they must take stock and then take charge of their own futures. The current crisis should therefore be considered an opportunity for a reset in which multilateral actions were given precedence over unilateralism, bearing in mind the pledge to leave no one behind. Similarly, no one should lose sight of the need to conserve nature and protect the environment. Climate change, like COVID-19, spared no country and the most vulnerable ones, like Madagascar, needed increased access to concessional financing.

145. **Ms. Marinkov** (Serbia) said that the enormous socioeconomic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic were also an opportunity for the United Nations and all Member States to join forces and create a better, more prosperous and stable world in which no one was left behind. They owed it to the coming generations to build back better. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Addis

Ababa Action Agenda would be crucial in dealing with the global challenges of economic instability, growing social inequality and climate change. Serbia continued to attach great importance to the implementation of those instruments and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

146. Extensive measures had been adopted by the Government to implement the 2030 Agenda at the national level. Those measures focused, in particular, on the eradication of poverty; the creation of decent work and economic growth; the promotion of more inclusive and higher quality education and health care; the achievement of full gender equality; and the prevention of violence against women.

147. Serbia had presented its first voluntary national review of the Goals at the high-level political forum in July 2019. The presentation had provided an opportunity to shed light on her country's strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda and had highlighted the important synergies between national achievement of the Goals and integration processes under way with the European Union.

148. The United Nations country team had carried out an assessment of the socioeconomic consequences of COVID-19 in Serbia that focused on the first six months after the outbreak of the pandemic and was based on official data and specific surveys carried out by various agencies and programmes within the United Nations system. According to the assessment, the Government of Serbia had reacted in a timely and effective manner. The strong coordination of institutions and efficient allocation of resources were also highlighted, although the response to the pandemic was judged somewhat slow in local communities given the time taken to reach vulnerable groups. Overall, the health-care system of Serbia was assessed to have reacted swiftly and with adequate human resources and physical capacities under the circumstances. With respect to the macroeconomic response, the assessment revealed that small and medium-sized enterprises had shown great adaptability, while industrial production had been hit the hardest.

149. The Head of the WHO Country Office in Belgrade had stated that the pandemic was "under full control" in Serbia and had commended the Government's efforts and measures, as well as the attitude of the Serbian people in overcoming the pandemic.

150. COVID-19 should be seen as an opportunity to combat climate change and to move towards a green and resilient recovery. In that regard, Serbia had made important steps towards the achievement of ambitious

climate goals through the adoption of relevant legislation on climate change and a national low-carbon development strategy.

151. As a world biodiversity hub, Serbia remained committed to the efforts made by the international community to unite the world in its struggle for the survival of life on planet Earth. A Serbian initiative to increase tree coverage in the region had received support as a way forward in the quest to achieve the greatest possible number of climate goals. It was only through such examples of cooperation that problems related to the pollution and devastation of the ecosystem could be solved.

152. **Mr. Petchezi** (Togo) said that the COVID-19 health crisis was plunging the global economy into a recession that was exacerbating inequalities within and among countries. While the pandemic was a tragedy, it could also be transformed into an opportunity to build back better and improve people's lives through international cooperation.

153. Multilateralism provided the opportunity for the international community to work together to address the major challenges posed by COVID-19. The accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda would be crucial in that regard. The challenge of financing of the 2030 Agenda had however also been complicated by the impact of COVID-19. His delegation therefore welcomed the recent holding of the High-level Event on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond and hoped that the specific recommendations that had emerged from it would lead the international community to take effective actions in the six areas identified.

154. The paralysing debt burdens of developing countries were also affecting their ability to combat COVID-19. Debt cancellation was thus no longer merely an option but an absolute necessity. Togo welcomed the pledges made in that regard by the G20 countries, IMF and the World Bank and encouraged all other bilateral and multilateral creditors to do the same.

155. As the least developed countries accounted for only 1.1 per cent of global trade, building back better meant creating a more inclusive international economy. The time had therefore come to accelerate the WTO negotiations on the Doha Development Round.

156. **Mr. Ben Khaled** (Tunisia) said that the United Nations should be commended for responding quickly to contain the pandemic, in particular through the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 launched in

March 2020 with the assistance of various United Nations agencies. Building back better would be dependent, first of all, on multilateral diplomacy. Security Council resolution 2532 (2020) had set out a new conception of international peace and security that included a health dimension, which was a component also contained in the 2030 Agenda.

157. A new approach was needed for managing relations between States and international organizations, particularly international financial institutions and donors. Such approaches must take into account emerging challenges and disparities among countries in the area of development. In that context, his delegation welcomed the decision by G20 countries to suspend the debt of developing countries until they had overcome the impact of COVID-19.

158. The success of reconstruction and recovery efforts would also depend on combating corruption in order to consolidate good governance and the rule of law, which were priority areas under the Tunisian Constitution. Indeed, social and economic justice policies that left no one behind would only become a reality if institutions were transparent and accountable. Justice was the very basis for society and the Sustainable Development Goals had been established to offer equal opportunities to all. In view of the important interdependent nature of the Goals, the international community must take additional steps to ensure that they were achieved.

159. **Mr. Hatem** (Bahrain) said that the pandemic was not only a health crisis but also a socioeconomic crisis affecting the commitment of the international community to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Bahrain attached great importance to development issues and to the achievement of the Goals during decade for action.

160. Bahrain had taken important steps to leave no one behind, including the adoption of a strategic framework with United Nations agencies, and it continued to integrate the Goals into its development programmes in the context of the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030.

161. The Government had approved a financial stimulus package worth 4.3 billion Bahraini dinars to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and provide assistance for the achievement of the Goals. It was also working towards the establishment of five model cities that would help to accelerate the achievement of the Goals, particularly in the areas of environmental protection and energy efficiency. Women were crucial partners for development in all its dimensions and his country wished to reaffirm its commitment to the

advancement of women and the achievement of their aspirations.

162. Bahrain had been one of the first countries to adhere to international instruments for the protection of biodiversity. It was proud to host the Regional Office for West Asia of the United Nations Environmental Programme.

163. **Mr. Rupende** (Zimbabwe) said that all countries were fighting to protect their citizens and communities as COVID-19 rippled throughout the world. The very principles behind the pledge made five years earlier to leave no one behind might now be the answer to a rapid path forward in the aftermath of COVID-19. The year 2020 marked the beginning of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, a decade in which the lives of current and future generation could be transformed and they could then live in a world where there was no poverty and hunger, where everyone had access to health, education, justice, energy, clean water and decent jobs, and where nature was protected from environmental degradation and pollution. Unfortunately, the global efforts to improve the lives of people everywhere by 2030 had already been off track by the end of 2019. That situation had been compounded by a pandemic that affected the world's poorest and most vulnerable people the most.

164. The theme of building back better was therefore highly relevant in guiding the Committee's work. However, achieving a new global inclusive economic system required able leadership and the implementation of good policies. The current global health crisis had revealed how much the globalized world and international interdependency had dramatically changed the meaning and nature of development.

165. Development was a multifaceted concept that was directly and intrinsically linked to all walks of human life, from social development to peace and security. The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the view that development approaches must be sustainable and include long-term solutions. In that regard, the 2030 Agenda already provided the international community with the tools required not only to end poverty, hunger and inequality, but also to take action on climate change and environmental degradation, improve access to health and education, close the digital divide and, most importantly, create better lives for all.

166. At the national level, the Government continued to align the principles and objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda with its national development plans and policies. In February 2020, it had hosted the sixth Africa

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which had adopted the Victoria Falls Declaration in which policies and strategies were outlined for development and reform initiatives to drive the sustainable development agenda on the African continent. The Forum had noted the progress made to date, had drawn attention to existing gaps and had offered solutions to contribute towards the further promotion of sustainable development on the continent.

167. Despite the progress made globally on various Goal indicators, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda still constituted a great challenge in most African countries, including Zimbabwe. Those countries faced unique challenges and the current crisis would further compound the situation. As had been learned from past experiences, such disruptions not only impeded but in fact reversed decades of development gains.

168. At the same time, it was important not to lose sight of climate change, which represented an existential threat to humankind. The international community must therefore come together to ensure the proper implementation of the Paris Agreement.

169. Lastly, trade openness would be critical to the recovery process, particularly for developing countries and especially vulnerable countries.

170. **The Chair** said that, if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee agreed to hear the remaining speakers in English only.

171. *It was so decided.*

172. **The representative of Albania** said that a deep economic and health crisis was gripping the world and its socioeconomic consequences would last for many years to come. The COVID-19 pandemic had reversed the progress made towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the way in which Governments responded to the crisis would determine how soon the world recovered as well as its ability to manage other global challenges. The best way to address the negative socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic was through effective multilateral cooperation. In that regard, Albania supported the call of the Secretary-General for a large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive multilateral response.

173. A strong and effective United Nations development system could provide better support for countries in their efforts to implement the Agenda 2030. The Committee had a crucial role to play in supporting and advancing the achievement of the Goals. In that regard, the Committee should fully embrace the 2030

Agenda and help to find new solutions and innovative approaches to tackle the common challenges faced.

174. Albania was fully committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda in the context of its national strategy for development and integration. Actions financed by an acceleration fund for the Goals would result in an evidence-based understanding of the national progress made. At the same time, the achievement of the Goals went hand in hand with the Government's ambitious reforms aimed at European integration, which had a particular focus on Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. The implementation of judicial reforms had created the conditions for a more effective, accountable and transparent judicial system in Albania. The promotion of the rule of law at the national level would ensure equal access to justice for all.

175. The Government's economic reforms aimed to accelerate the pace of equitable growth. Albania was implementing structural reforms that would raise productivity and competitiveness in the economy, create more jobs and improve governance and public service delivery.

176. As gender equality and the empowerment of women were priorities of the Government, several initiatives had been launched to improve the status of women in Albania in the economic, political and social spheres. As a result, Albania currently had the fifth most gender-balanced Cabinet in the world, with 53 per cent women ministers.

177. As Governments acting alone would not be successful in achieving the Goals, it was crucial to find the right ways to cooperate with civil society, academia, businesses and other important stakeholders. Effective partnerships could assist countries not only by finding innovative solutions but also by promoting good corporate governance and the flow of targeted long-term investments, including foreign direct investments. The principle of leaving no one behind should remain central to the efforts to implement the Agenda 2030.

178. **The representative of Turkey** said that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the most vulnerable people around the world. Turkey had been playing its part in the international cooperation efforts to contain the virus and mitigate its impacts. For example, it had supported the development of, and equitable access to, an effective and affordable vaccine and had pledged \$53 million for the COVAX initiative. It had also responded to the medical equipment needs of more than 150 countries and eight international organizations,

including the Pacific Islands Forum through the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19.

179. Stabilizing the global economy remained the most pressing and challenging task before the international community. Turkey supported the relevant initiatives of G20 and IMF in that regard, including the Debt Service Suspension Initiative. It also welcomed the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General within the framework of the Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of Covid-19 and Beyond. The humanitarian assistance provided by Turkey to combat the pandemic totalled over \$32 million.

180. Weak production capacities continued to overshadow the health response and recovery efforts of developing countries. The Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries hosted by Turkey, in collaboration with WHO, UNDP and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development had launched the Technology Access Partnership initiative in May 2020. The initiative aimed to increase the local production of essential medical technologies in developing countries by bringing innovators, manufacturers and academia together with local manufacturers in order to share data, knowledge and other necessary support.

181. Financing was essential for the implementation of sustainable development projects. However, in the context of the global economic slowdown, access to finance and financing for sustainable development had become major challenges. The effective mobilization and efficient use of public, private, domestic and external resources had thus become all the more important. The pandemic was also reminder of the importance of implementing targeted financing policies and the efficient allocation of limited resources. Promoting a better alignment of global financial flows with the 2030 Agenda in developing countries remained crucial.

182. The current crisis had also shown the importance of designing targeted and proper environmental policies. There was a need for enhanced international cooperation and for action to reformulate policies that could turn the crisis into an opportunity to foster a climate-resilient future.

183. The United Nations should play a central role in coordinating the international efforts to contain the pandemic. The Committee was the appropriate platform to strengthen discussions and enhance international cooperation. In that regard, the current session's negotiations on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review would provide us opportunity to reinforce the

role of the United Nations development system and to coordinate, streamline and deliver an integrated United Nations response on the ground, in line with the development needs and goals of programme countries.

184. Turkey was an ardent supporter of multilateralism and of a rules-based international system. It would continue to support the Committee's role as the custodian of the Goals. The 2030 Agenda should be the principal framework for a stronger recovery and to ensure a more equitable global economy, inclusive societies and a sustainable recovery.

185. **The representative of Azerbaijan** said that the COVID-19 pandemic was plunging the world into an unprecedented socioeconomic and financial crisis. In order to stop the spread of the virus, her Government had taken timely and necessary preventive measures. WHO had in fact referred to Azerbaijan as a model country in the fight against the COVID-19.

186. As the Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Azerbaijan had requested to convene the thirty-first special session of the General Assembly in response to COVID-19, and more than 130 Member States had supported that initiative. To bolster the COVID-19 response efforts across the world, Azerbaijan had also allocated \$10 million to WHO, thereby making a significant contribution to the strengthening of multilateralism, solidarity and cooperation against the pandemic at the regional and global levels.

187. Azerbaijan attached great importance to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Its two voluntary national reviews had underscored the commitment of Azerbaijan to all 17 Goals and to the principles that underpinned the 2030 Agenda. Indeed, Azerbaijan had shown the best results among the countries of the South Caucasus and the Caspian Sea region and was ranked fifty-fourth out of 166 countries in the *Sustainable Development Report 2020*.

188. Located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and having no access to the ocean, Azerbaijan was an enabler of inter- and intraregional transport connectivity projects, which were transforming the country into a transregional logistical hub. Azerbaijan had also managed to become a pioneer in the region in initiating and enabling a number of strategic transregional transport, information communications technology and energy projects, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, the Baku International Sea Trade Port, Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway and the southern gas corridor. Through those efforts, Azerbaijan was

continuing to contribute to the sustainable development of Eurasia and was making a valuable contribution to multilateral cooperation and to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

189. Unfortunately, a number of threats, including protracted conflicts, were currently endangering the progress made by Azerbaijan and exacerbating the challenges ahead. On 27 September 2020, the armed forces of Armenia, blatantly violating the ceasefire regime, had launched another act of aggression against Azerbaijan by intensively shelling the positions of the armed forces of Azerbaijan along the front line. To date, 31 civilians, including women and children, had been killed and 168 people had been wounded. Extensive damage had also been inflicted on civilian property and infrastructure in the area.

190. That new act of aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan was the continuation of the most recent provocations by Armenia, including an attempted armed attack in the direction of the Tovuz district from 12 to 16 July 2020. Its objective was to gain control over Azerbaijani territory in the heights, which would enable the armed forces of Armenia to keep the surrounding Azerbaijani localities and the strategic oil and gas pipelines and other infrastructure, including the southern gas corridor and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, under constant surveillance and threat. Moreover, only three days earlier, the Armenian armed forces had launched a missile attack on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Export Oil Pipeline, which played an important role in regional development and in providing energy security for Europe by delivering crude oil from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean region.

191. Those provocations had highlighted once again the need for a swift settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan. There could be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. In order to achieve sustainable international peace and security, the occupation must come to an end. That could only be guaranteed through compliance with the norms and principles of international law and by implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions.

192. **The representative of Angola** said that the COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented crisis with the potential to reverse years of progress made on several levels. While all countries had suffered from the pandemic, it was evident that the least developed

countries had been disproportionately affected. Their already deficient health and education systems were now even further behind than before the crisis and inequalities had been exacerbated as a result of increased unemployment and bankruptcy.

193. Angola was in the process of graduating from its status as a least developed country and was also preparing to present its first voluntary national review of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2021. However, the global pandemic was hindering its efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

194. His Government was making efforts to diversify the economy and reduce dependence on a single commodity in order to enhance global economic stability. However, the crisis had exacerbated financial problems by halting economic and social growth. International cooperation was needed to tackle such issues as external debt and illicit financial flows, and to facilitate the return of assets to their lawful beneficiaries. Those financial burdens negatively impacted the economies of the least developed countries and diminished the availability of funds for investment in vital social sectors, such as health, education, housing, infrastructures and sanitation.

195. His delegation commended all the initiatives being undertaken by the United Nations and the international financial institutions in an attempt to minimize the negative impacts of COVID-19 throughout the world, especially in the least developed countries. Regrettably, however, that would still not be enough to erase the devastation inflicted by the pandemic.

196. The increased use of online services had accentuated technological gaps and disparities. School closures in parts of the world where online classes were not possible would endanger the education of an entire generation. Global digitalization of the least developed countries was urgently needed.

197. He urged countries to abide by their environmental commitments under the Paris Agreement and all related treaties. The struggle to stay afloat economically must not further harm the environment or endanger the only planet that could be left to future generations.

198. **The representative of Namibia** said that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was, more than ever, at the heart of the political agenda of the entire world. In the process of building back better, the 2030 Agenda should remain the guiding framework. However, a change in mindset was needed not only from a financing perspective but also in terms of the

programmes, projects and partnership through which the 2030 Agenda was implemented.

199. During the High-level Meeting on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond, many views had been put forward on how to deal with future pandemics. In that regard, the President of Namibia had announced that the country aimed to develop a suite of innovative financial tools, including green, blue and transition bonds as well as international carbon credits. Namibia also supported debt for climate swaps. One of the valuable proposals put forward during the High-Level Meeting was the establishment of regional resilience funds. There was also a need to promote joint experiment projects in search of COVID-19 vaccines.

200. Tackling peace and security issues collectively could help to solve some of the challenges associated with mobilizing private finance for development purpose. Cooperation was also needed in the fight against illicit financial flows, in order to ensure the successful return of illicitly acquired assets.

201. Namibia joined others in calling for the developed countries to fulfil their commitments to provide 0.7 percent of their gross national income as ODA. That call was consistent with the discourse on financing for development and building back better.

202. Global solidarity was also needed in the fight against unilateral economic measures, which constituted an impediment to the recovery process. Such measures had severely affected the capacity of the targeted States to increase their domestic resources mobilization efforts.

203. Namibia welcomed the Debt Service Suspension Initiative and supported the call for its extension up to 2021. However, the scope of the Initiative should be widened to include middle-income countries, which had also been affected the pandemic.

204. Namibia reaffirmed the importance of protecting biodiversity, combating desertification and land degradation and mitigating climate change. Desertification, land degradation and drought had taken a heavy toll in Namibia, which was a Co-Chair of the Group of Friends on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought. He called on the wider United Nations membership to join the Group so that they could share best practices, strategies and ideas to deal with those issues.

205. Lastly, Namibia welcomed the convening of the world food systems summit in 2021. His delegation

would work with the United Nations to explore ideas aimed at transforming food systems in changing climate conditions.

206. **The observer the Holy See** said that the informal dialogues on the revitalization of the Committee during the previous session had confirmed Member States' commitment to its mandate and purpose. The adoption of a decision by consensus was a credit to all delegations and a sign of hope for a renewed spirit of consensus in the Committee. The Holy See had taken an active part in the discussions and welcomed that the decision had affirmed that the work of the Committee needed to be better aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, while recognizing that the purview of the Committee was broader than the 2030 Agenda. Agreement on that fundamental point would no doubt serve to facilitate further discussions on revitalization.

207. The Holy See was concerned, however, that the aforementioned decision had introduced changes with regard to the periodicity of some draft resolutions. The periodicity of each draft resolution was the result of intergovernmental negotiations and reflected a delicate balance that delegations had achieved in a spirit of compromise. His delegation encouraged the Committee to give consideration to how the decision would impact discussions on particular agenda items, as well as the negotiation of draft resolutions in general. In order to respect the intergovernmental nature of the Committee and the need to retain the focus on the subject matter of the agenda items, timely reports from the Secretary-General, well-planned meetings and adequate time for discussions were needed. Successful negotiations also required the early circulation of drafts and sufficient time to consult with capitals and conduct meaningful informal consultations that were open, transparent and inclusive.

208. Development was not limited simply to the economic or financial spheres, but rather involved a unity of economic, ecological, social, cultural, spiritual, ethical and human dimensions, since the Committee's work concerned the dignity and development of men, women and children and the common good of all peoples. The 2030 Agenda was based on that integral approach. The importance of promoting and protecting fundamental human rights in the fight to eradicate poverty and foster integral human development could not be overstated. It did not serve the General Assembly, however, if there was duplication of topics in various Committees or if controversial issues that impeded progress in one Committee were introduced into other

Committees or forums, with the same predictable result. Therefore, specific considerations on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the meaning of “rights,” belonged to the discussions of the Third Committee.

209. The decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals must live up to its name and deliver on its promise, beginning with eradicating poverty and ending hunger. That obligation was not based on political documents or plans, but rather stemmed from a sense of common humanity. It was not acceptable that hundreds of millions of people were barely surviving and were going without their daily bread; that millions of people continued to be deprived of primary goods; that economic and technological inequality deteriorated the social fabric; and that dependence on unlimited material progress was threatening people’s common home, planet Earth.

210. Advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other relevant commitments and obligations had become even more challenging as a result of the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had highlighted how vulnerable and interconnected everyone was. The issues under discussion by the Committee at the current session would have real-world consequences and deserved its focused attention and common action.

211. **The observer for the State of Palestine** said that there was no doubt that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had enormously increased the challenges that all countries and peoples were facing, causing millions to fall deeper into the poverty trap. During such unprecedented times, no country or region was left untouched, and no aspect of life was unaffected. As the pandemic did not differentiate between North or South, rich or poor, it was imperative that all work together to get back on track in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. One of the very important lessons learned from the pandemic was that no one was safe until everyone was safe. Multilateralism and solidarity were thus more important than ever.

212. The pandemic had deepened many of the vulnerabilities that Palestinians were already suffering under Israeli occupation. The current social and economic trends in the Occupied Palestinian Territory indicated that the attainment of the Goals would be out of reach unless there were drastic positive changes to the existing conditions. Israeli-imposed restrictions, the expansion of the illegal settlements and other practices

not only prevented development in the occupied territories, but also caused humanitarian crises that necessitated the diversion of national and international efforts from development to immediate relief.

213. However, despite the difficulties and challenges, the State of Palestine continued to exert tremendous efforts at all levels to implement the 2030 Agenda. The State of Palestine, in cooperation with the United Nations country team, had succeeded in launching a very important document, entitled “Atlas of Sustainable Development 2020”, which constituted a road map in the field of development in various governorates. The atlas reviewed priority issues and indicators for sustainable development in Palestine using maps, drawings and diagrams that reflected national development priorities. It was intended to document development efforts by mapping what had been achieved across the country and in all sectors. It also showed how the Government and people were able to build and grow, even under the very harsh and challenging political reality and military occupation.

214. It was important to unleash the full capabilities of the United Nations development system in order to implement the 2030 Agenda. In addition to sustainable and predictable financing of the development system, an efficient, effective and able resident coordinator system played a critical role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A consensual, comprehensive, action-oriented and effective resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review was the only way to steer the United Nations development system towards mitigating the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

215. **The representative of Armenia** said that his delegation resolutely rejected the false narratives put forward by the representative of Azerbaijan, which were a distortion of the facts regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and were not supported by any credible source. The aggression of Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh and its critical civilian infrastructure had caused serious development and environmental risks.

216. The attempts of the representative of Azerbaijan to justify the criminal behaviour of her country’s political-military leadership beggared belief. The desperate attempts by Azerbaijan to attribute to Armenia attacks against civilian settlements and energy and transport infrastructure went beyond the limits of common sense.



The aim of that disinformation campaign was to cover up the massive targeted shelling by Azerbaijan of large settlements of Nagorno-Karabakh since the first day of the war, which had resulted in many losses among the civilian population and serious damage being inflicted on essential infrastructure. With the spread of such fake narratives, Azerbaijan was also preparing the ground for the continuation of its criminal policy.

217. Despite the blockade and constant military provocations by Azerbaijan, the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh were doing their utmost to build a resilient country and ensure economic, social and cultural development by virtue of their people's right to self-determination. The authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh were committed to integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into the domestic policy and reform agenda. In reiteration of its political will and commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda, the Government of Nagorno-Karabakh had prepared its first voluntary national review of the Goals in 2019, which highlighted the progress achieved to date.

218. The people of Nagorno-Karabakh were entitled to the right to development. Article 1, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights empowered people to pursue economic, social and cultural development by virtue of the right to self-determination in the following terms: "All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence."

219. **The representative of Azerbaijan** said that the comments just made by the representative of Armenia were a failed attempt to deny the facts and mislead the Committee. The act of aggression resorted to by Armenia on 27 September 2020 was yet another blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nation, the fundamental norms and principles of international law and international humanitarian law, and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

220. From 4 October 2020, the armed forces of Armenia had expanded the area of their strikes, targeting the major cities of Azerbaijan and the critical civilian infrastructure of an important region situated far away from the combat zone. The armed forces of Armenia had launched massive missile attacks from the territory of Armenia against the densely populated residential areas

of Ganja, the second largest city of Azerbaijan, and against Mingachevir, the fourth largest city of Azerbaijan. Mingachevir had been hit by three "Smerch" rockets, two of which had exploded in close vicinity to the Mingachevir hydropower complex. In order to repel the aggression and ensure the safety of the civilian population, the armed forces of Azerbaijan had undertaken a counter-offensive operation in the exercise of the right of self-defence and in full compliance with international humanitarian law.

221. Even the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had not prevented Armenia from its armed provocation. It was apparent that Armenian statements on its support for adherence to the appeal of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire was nothing than an utter falsehood. No doubt, Armenia's objective was not to save lives and alleviate the suffering of people in need but to expand and secure its aggression and annexation.

222. Furthermore, the aggressor State continued to violate all principles of international law related to the protection and management of water resources in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including at the transboundary level. The hostile attitude towards nature and the environmental terror in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and surrounding districts of Azerbaijan currently occupied by Armenia posed a serious threat to the environment of the entire region and to the survival of wildlife in the transboundary rivers. At the same time, the use of reservoirs in the occupied territories had become impossible and they had become a potential source of danger to the population living in the surrounding areas, owing to their lack of maintenance. The fact that Armenia was not a party to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes made it impossible to resolve transboundary water issues within the framework of international norms. That situation, which was a serious violation of the principles of international law and human rights, also posed serious challenges to the implementation of internationally accepted instruments, including obligations under the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

223. **The representative of Armenia** said that the representative of Azerbaijan had continued to voice far-fetched accusations and he regretted that disseminating misinformation, distorting the facts and simply spreading lies against Armenia had become a working habit of the Azerbaijani delegation and its representatives. Azerbaijan had once again resorted to

fabricating lies and blaming a neighbour for its failure to deliver on its own commitments, both domestically and internationally. Armenia resolutely rejected the accusation that it had attacked economic and transport infrastructure or civilian settlements in Azerbaijan. That was another lie from Azerbaijan that was primarily aimed at justifying the shelling of peaceful settlements in Artsakh and Armenia. War crimes by the armed forces of Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh were well documented. The ongoing aggression by Azerbaijan made it crystal clear why that country had chosen not to support the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire, launched at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic to help the world unite in order to defeat the virus. By attacking a peaceful population and crucial economic infrastructure throughout the territory of Artsakh, Azerbaijan was not only rejecting the right of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to life and development but was also threatening regional development and the prosperity of the entire region. He urged the delegation of Azerbaijan to remain focused on the Committee's agenda and not to further hijack the session.

224. **The representative of Azerbaijan** said that the comments just made by the representative of Armenia, full of the usual distortions and fabrications, illustrated the consistent attempts of that Member State to deny its policy of aggression, hostility, hatred and falsifications. In particular, it should be stressed that all military actions during the previous war and during the current hostilities had taken place exclusively on the sovereign soil of Azerbaijan. The Republic of Azerbaijan had no land claims on any soil but would not yield an inch of its territory to anyone. As for the causes and consequences of the war, in the early 1990s Armenia had used military force against Azerbaijan to fulfil its long-nurtured plan of seizing territory from Azerbaijan. The aggression had been well prepared and, as a result, a significant part of Azerbaijan's territory, including Nagorno-Karabakh, the seven adjacent districts and some exclaves, were seized by Armenia. In its unanimously adopted resolutions [822 \(1993\)](#), [853 \(1993\)](#), [874 \(1993\)](#) and [884 \(1993\)](#), the Security Council had reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory. In response to the territorial claims made, it had also confirmed in those resolutions that the Nagorno-Karabakh region was an integral part of Azerbaijan and had demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces from all the occupied territories. It was the

Armenian armed attacks against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territories that had led to the adoption of those Security Council resolutions.

225. For peace, stability and security to be achieved, it was necessary, first and foremost, to ensure the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders and the return of internally displaced persons to their homes and properties.

*The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.*