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Summary record of the 5th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 8 October 2021, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Frazier (Malta)
later: Ms. Micael (Vice-Chair) (Eritrea)

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

General debate (continued)

1. **Ms. Tshering** (Bhutan) said that, as the world struggled to recover from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and to regain lost ground, especially in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the theme of the session for the Second Committee, “Crisis, Resilience and Recovery – Accelerating Progress Towards the 2030 Agenda”, encapsulated the challenges faced by the global community. Although the pandemic had been largely contained domestically, it had shown that strong leadership, a science-driven approach and national solidarity coupled with the unstinting support of partners was essential. The breakthrough called for by the Secretary-General was not beyond reach, if trust, solidarity and cooperation were forged. In the context of the pandemic, the commitment to leaving no one behind translated into ensuring equitable access to safe and reliable vaccines and therapeutics. Even in the midst of the pandemic, the looming climate crisis and threats to biodiversity could not be overlooked. Although Bhutan was carbon negative, it was on the frontline in terms of the adverse impacts of climate change. The twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change would be critical to limiting warming to 1.5 C and must deliver on the unmet promise of \$100 billion of climate financing, split equally between adaptation and resilience, with more than half directed to vulnerable countries. Business as usual and the model of growth at all costs were no longer options. The Gross National Happiness Index had served as a compass for the balance between material well-being and the spiritual, emotional and cultural needs of society, and provided impetus to build resilience in times of crisis. The report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, was therefore welcome, particularly in its call to correct the blind spot in how economic prosperity and progress was measured.

2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should continue to serve as a road map, with timely review and assessment to propel progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The second voluntary national review, presented at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, had facilitated strategic assessment and issues such as green solutions for food systems, approaches to learning and preparedness for disasters and pandemics had come to the fore. Particular efforts would be made as Bhutan prepared for graduation from the least developed countries in 2023.

3. While the Committee’s focus on groups of countries in special situations provided an opportunity to consider how to address the special development needs of the most vulnerable, the reports and recommendations of 2021 were distinguished by the urgency of their calls. As the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries approached and the progress made under the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 was at risk of reversal, more targeted interventions were needed to keep least developed countries and landlocked developing countries on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; renewed partnership and solidarity would be essential to progress.

4. **Mr. Koba** (Indonesia) said that, despite the hurdles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the positive economic growth experienced by developed and developing countries was reason for optimism. Disparities in COVID-19 vaccination rates, the trend towards vaccine discrimination and discrepancies in countries’ capacities to provide fiscal stimulus called for the Committee to consider the global economic recovery. First, the return to pre-pandemic output levels should be accelerated, with country-specific macroeconomic responses; support measures should not be withdrawn prematurely. More targeted measures were needed to support recovery while maintaining long-term fiscal sustainability and price and financial stability, including through enhanced international coordination. Second, the conditions should be created for a sustainable and inclusive economic recovery, by restoring productivity, creating jobs and incomes, developing the digital economy and facilitating access to finance for small- and medium-sized enterprises. As the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, 2021 should leave a legacy of creative industries that were building a more prosperous and sustainable future for all. Third, resilience was needed against future crises. Efforts should focus on tackling inequalities, health systems strengthening and reducing vulnerability to climate change, among other issues. His Government was therefore pleased to have facilitated the draft resolutions on science, technology and innovation for sustainable development and financial inclusion for sustainable development. As the host of the upcoming seventh session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in May 2022, his Government would work with Member States and the secretariat to build sustainable resilience and strengthen its commitments to achieving the targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and implementing the 2030 Agenda. The Indonesian

presidency of the Group of 20 (G20) in 2022 would focus on recovery and inclusivity, with the aim of benefiting the world at large, beyond the members of the Group.

5. **Mr. Costa Filho** (Brazil) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had shown the need for greater equity and international solidarity, especially in times of crisis; the scramble for personal protective equipment and vaccines was disheartening and had left many developing countries in a difficult situation. Despite multilateral initiatives and bilateral donations, great inequality remained. He highlighted the harsh effect of the pandemic on food security and the fight against hunger, noting that the report of the Secretary-General on agriculture development, food security and nutrition (A/76/216) had stated that the level of food insecurity had risen in 2020 by the same amount as in the preceding five years. Action must be taken to reverse that negative trend. A resilient and sustainable recovery should be inclusive, comprehensive and harness the full agricultural potential of the developing world. That would only be possible if historic systemic challenges were tackled, including those related to creating open international agricultural trade, free of distortions such as high tariffs, non-tariff barriers and trade distortive subsidies, and based on fair and transparent rules. The competitive and sustainable tropical agricultural system of his country played a role in that regard and fed more than 1 billion people around the world while using only 8 per cent of the country's territory. His Government had established a new pathway to low-carbon agriculture that combined different strategies for sustainable development. The need for a comprehensive perspective on agricultural and food supply strategies that took into account the importance of encompassing the three dimensions of sustainable development was not unanimously recognized, and proposals to solve global challenges using a one-size-fits-all or a neo-Malthusian approach had resurfaced in recent years. As his Government had stated at the United Nations Food Systems Summit, prescriptive visions of sustainability must be avoided as the international community moved towards a global food system that balanced national capacities, food safety standards, nutritional diversity and quality, and sustainable development.

6. In order to build back better, investment should be scaled up in more resilient societies to ensure that they were better prepared for future economic, health or environmental challenges by promoting the Sustainable Development Goals and more sustainable productive systems. His Government had taken the first steps towards the transition to low-carbon energy systems decades before and had an energy mix with more than

80 per cent of energy generated from clean and renewable sources. All clean energy solutions had a role to play in the transition, while taking into account regional circumstances and local realities. Noting that his Government had set out a long-term objective of climate neutrality, he called on developed countries to step up, including on the crucial issue of ensuring climate finance for mitigation and adaptation as a key way of enabling developing countries to implement ambitious climate actions. The twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change represented a crucial opportunity to reach a meaningful understanding that allowed for progress in the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Shortages in goods, as global supply chains adjusted to the spike in global demand following months of reduced activity, could provide an opportunity to diversify the world's productive base. Productive capacity should be expanded in the developing world for vaccines, medical supplies, agricultural products, industrial goods and services, as part of the path to job and wealth creation, fiscal and debt stability and sustainable development.

7. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that the Committee's work should be guided by the need to empower the most vulnerable, protect global commons and deliver on public goods. It was possible to feed a growing global population while safeguarding the environment. Food systems must be preserved in a manner that restored degraded land and combated desertification to gain more land for food production, for the benefit of current and future generations. Food security was critical to addressing the triple challenge of hunger, poverty and livelihoods. Access to markets was an essential part of developing countries' efforts to eradicate extreme poverty; all trade barriers and distortions should be set aside so that people everywhere could trade freely and boost their economies. With a view to the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, he called on all parties to honour their commitments under the Paris Agreement, in particular by facilitating access to climate finance for adaptation and mitigation. Urgent action was needed to preserve the planet. Domestic renewable energy sources would be leveraged as part of the energy transition through green industrialization.

8. The challenges of overburdened health systems, mounting debt and insufficient access to finance complicated efforts by developing countries to bridge the development gaps caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The limitations on countries like Namibia, which could not access concessional loans, were debilitating, particularly against a backdrop of reduced

commodity prices and sources of revenue. Requests for funds to support economic recovery should be simplified and expedited by all development partners. Multilateralism was the vehicle for coordinated, urgent and effective action to build back better, while protecting global commons and delivering on public goods. Multilateral action over the coming years must be bold enough to accelerate and support efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on time. The Committee should therefore focus on the overarching objective of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

9. **Ms. Nguyen Tra Phuong** (Viet Nam) said that the foremost priority was to get the COVID-19 pandemic under control in order to save lives and secure economic recovery to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Greater international cooperation was needed to ensure equitable, universal and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines, while accelerated national vaccination efforts and public health precautions would help control the virus to prevent it from inflicting deadly damage. It was likely that the Asia Pacific region would achieve less than 10 per cent of the targets for the Goals by 2030. A reliable social security net in every Member State was therefore essential to prevent social disruption or political instability. Sustained efforts were needed to design and implement risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems to strengthen resilience during the recovery period.

10. The successful pursuit of the Goals was the only way for the world to overcome unpredictable challenges. She expressed support for the 2030 Agenda, noting that the Goals had been mainstreamed in domestic policy and that the first voluntary national review had noted that Viet Nam was on track to achieve 5 of the 17 Goals, but needed accelerated and transformative implementation to achieve the remaining 12 Goals. Greater efforts and cooperation were needed on environmental protection to address cross-cutting issues for sustainable development, such as climate change, marine debris and transboundary haze pollution. Her Government was committed to contributing to the goals of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. It appreciated the leadership shown by the United Nations in coordinating a global green, resilient and inclusive recovery as a comprehensive strategy to cut carbon emissions, conserve natural resources, create good jobs, promote gender equality and bridge social inequalities and development gaps among countries.

11. **Ms. Ahmadova** (Azerbaijan) said that the measures taken by her Government since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic to protect its citizens,

including an immunization campaign and a stimulus package, had led to international recognition from the World Health Organization. Global solidarity and cooperation should be strengthened to fight the pandemic at the regional and global levels. Her Government had participated in international efforts by providing financial contributions and vaccine doses, and, in its role as Chair of the Group of Non-Aligned Countries, had initiated a number of global initiatives to address the pandemic. To further that activity, a draft resolution on vaccine access would be submitted to the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly. Her Government had also suggested establishing a United Nations high-level panel on global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic to provide guidance on a global post-pandemic response.

12. Azerbaijan intended to become a leading country on the path to full and effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It had been the first in its region to submit the third voluntary national review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and significant progress had been noted in the *Sustainable Development Report 2021*. Particular attention was paid to climate change. A number of projects were being implemented to meet the voluntary national commitments made under the Paris Agreement, alongside the consideration of additional targets for 2050. Participation in regional connectivity projects, alongside Baku International Sea Trade Port, would render Azerbaijan a primary transport and logistics hub.

13. The normalization of relations with Armenia had opened up new prospects for regional cooperation, development and prosperity. That had been further complemented by the trilateral statement of 11 January 2021 by Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation, which would lead to direct intergovernmental dialogue on the unblocking of all economic and transport relations in the region. Rehabilitation and reconstruction were under way in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan, including through the building of new “smart cities” and the restoration of essential services using advanced technology. Also in the liberated territories, an emerging transport hub would strengthen the position of the entire region, a new land route between Azerbaijan and Turkey – the Zangezur Corridor – would supplement existing trade and transport connectivity, and an international airport would become a regional transport and logistics centre. Agreements had been signed with international energy companies to construct wind and solar power plants as part of efforts to achieve 30 per cent renewables in the domestic energy mix by 2030. One of those power plants would be in the declared green energy zone in the liberated territories. Inclusive

and sustainable economic growth and a peaceful and inclusive society were key priorities; achieving peace and security in the region would contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had brought much suffering and had jeopardized most countries' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As long as there was a disparity in access to vaccines, the threat of the virus remained. Climate change was no longer a distant threat. The timely and balanced implementation of the 2030 Agenda remained the most comprehensive solution to both the multidimensional crisis brought about by the pandemic and the impact of climate change. The elected civilian Government of his country had taken office in 2016 and had overseen positive economic growth and national development that was largely aligned with the 2030 Agenda. In 2020, in the context of the pandemic, social and economic policies had been introduced to maintain economic growth and protect lives. It had been expected that Myanmar would graduate from the least developed countries and present its voluntary national review in 2021. The illegal military coup in February 2021 had upended the nation, however, and caused a humanitarian catastrophe. The people of Myanmar were in peril. The combined impact of the military coup and the pandemic was leading to increased poverty, economic instability and the loss of hard-won development gains. The longer the crisis continued, the further the nation would be from achieving the Goals and graduating from the least developed countries.

15. Since a strong and positive relationship between government and people was vital to building a prosperous and sustainable future, the emphasis in the report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, on the need for a renewed social contract in that regard was appreciated. Achievement of the Goals would require good governance, rule of law and justice for all, and public trust in State institutions was an indispensable part of that culture. Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, was therefore a foundation for achieving the other Goals. In Myanmar, where unaccountable military leaders were attempting to take power by staging an illegal coup, the rule of law and justice had been taken away and without them, institutional legitimacy and good governance could not be established. The Goals could not be achieved in such an environment. The people of Myanmar would need to restart from zero to recover from the devastating consequences of the military coup and rebuild a peaceful, just and inclusive society, as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda.

16. **Mr. Al-Saadi** (Yemen) said that his country was in its seventh year of an economic and humanitarian disaster brought about by the Houthis militia coup against the legitimate authorities. The Houthis had taken over State institutions, seized foreign cash reserves, stopped paying salaries and imposed arbitrary taxes. Houthi warlords speculated in oil derivatives on the black market. The result had been economic contraction in all sectors, a decline in the delivery of essential services and a precipitous drop in the global rankings of his country's business climate. He called on international partners to support the Government's efforts to rebuild national capacities and get the country back on track. He also urged the international community to put pressure on the Houthis to allow access by a technical assessment team to the oil tanker *Safer*, which was floating off the port of Ra's Isa with over 1.1 million barrels of unsecured oil that posed an environmental threat to both the Red and Arabian Seas.

17. For Yemen, the COVID-19 pandemic was a crisis within a crisis. The behaviour of the militias had brought about the closure of more than half of the country's medical facilities and led many medical professionals to emigrate. Yemenis in Houthi-controlled areas lacked access to information about the virus because of the Houthis' stubborn refusal to acknowledge the pandemic. He called on the international community to put pressure on the Houthis to allow access to vaccinations in those areas.

18. **Mr. Chatrnúch** (Slovakia) said that the Committee's key role in sustainable recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic should be borne in mind during all negotiations. Climate change was the most serious challenge that humanity had faced since the founding of the United Nations; the triple threat of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss should be addressed in an urgent, coordinated and inclusive manner. In the light of the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, bold action was needed. Ambitious commitments would be expected under the framework of the Committee, and at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and other high-level events over the coming months.

19. The pandemic had highlighted the digital divide and the need to promote digitalization, science and new technology. The Committee should accord due significance to the draft resolutions referring to the role of information and communications technology (ICT) and innovation in sustainable development, in order to build back better and create more resilient societies. The

disruption of education, which was the backbone of communities and the stepping stone for future development, must be duly addressed. It would be a mistake to exclude young people, who were more educated and empowered than ever before, from decision-making forums. Young people were terrified, given the impact of today's decisions on their chances of survival. The international community had a duty to listen to their voices and provide a safe space for their self-realization. Only inclusive cooperation among all actors would ensure a post-pandemic recovery and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and therefore the success of the Second Committee. He reaffirmed his support for the revitalization of the General Assembly to make it more relevant and efficient and better equipped to address pressing contemporary issues.

20. **Mr. Diome** (Senegal) said that humanity was facing an unprecedented public health crisis that had killed close to 5 million persons and plunged 124 million into extreme poverty. His Government had introduced an economic and social resilience programme to raise medical standards, acquire vaccines and support households, businesses and workers, and a COVID-19 vaccine would soon go into production in Dakar. Inequality in access to vaccines and financing for sustainable and equitable development for all had been starkly demonstrated by the pandemic. Only 4 per cent of the population of Africa had been vaccinated against COVID-19, compared to the goal set by the World Health Organization of reaching 10 per cent of the population by 30 September 2021. While more than \$400 of special drawing rights were destined for rich countries and only \$230 billion for developing countries, Africa had received \$33 billion. That merited correction. The pandemic had revealed a multitude of continuing challenges, among them, debt, poverty, hunger, development financing, migration, armed conflict, climate change and biodiversity loss. A crisis of humanity had taken hold in hearts and minds.

21. The only path to truly achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda was the reinvigoration of solidarity and international cooperation to build inclusive and resilient societies and sustainable, fair economies on an inhabitable and viable planet. Inclusive societies would require a new social contract to eliminate systemic inequalities. Investment must be made in gender equality, women's financial autonomy and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women. Education, health care and employment should be accessible to all. Extensive reform was needed to global economic and financial governance and to the rules on granting credit and on developing countries'

debt and budget deficit ceilings, in order to put an end to the paradox of available yet inaccessible resources. The laudable efforts made during the pandemic, through the Debt Service Suspension Initiative and the measures taken by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, were insufficient. Developing countries must be allowed to finance their own development, in particular through substantial debt relief. Sustainable development must be built on respect for international environmental commitments. Climate action and solutions based on nature must be reinforced in recovery plans. Climate financing presented an opportunity for developing countries to adapt to climate change. His Government had committed to reducing its global emissions under the Paris Agreement and was working on its energy transition.

22. **Mr. Rosales Ramirez** (Honduras) said that the shadow cast by the COVID-19 pandemic had extended to an economic recession, the collapse of the universal health care system and increased unemployment. Support for the national economy in that regard prioritized those who depended on informal markets, small- and micro-sized businesses and women in precarious employment. In the context of the 2030 Agenda and the consideration of structural economic challenges, the strengthening of the multilateral system, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty, the challenges faced by developing countries – including middle-income countries – should be taken into account. Developing countries faced daunting problems, including climate change, increased inequality, expedited urbanization and environmental degradation, all of which had led to growing numbers facing poverty and hunger. It was the international community's duty to achieve a transition towards sustainable and resilient societies that included the prudent management of natural resources and basic services and respect for human rights. His Government was happy to be one of the global champions of the High-level Dialogue on Energy and to play an active part in solving the challenges identified at the Food Systems Summit.

23. Financing that was not timely was not sustainable. The reduction in access to concessional financing was a cause of concern and, as a middle-income country, Honduras had scant opportunity to access affordable financing. The classification of countries by income did not allow appropriate prioritization in the allocation of development financing and rendered such assistance less effective. Multidimensional indicators were needed to measure and identify development realities. Sustainable development required the adoption of measures to mitigate the effects of climate change. The continued failure to take climate change seriously would

jeopardize development gains, and thus, nations' domestic stability and world peace; the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change must produce results. A just globalization needed to be developed that respected human rights and the planet while also integrating the principles of sustainable development and social and economic inclusion.

24. **Mr. Pary Rodríguez** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that, as the multifaceted global public health crisis continued and the climate crisis deepened, many countries were developing their economies to get the Sustainable Development Goals back on track. In addition to those crises, his country had suffered a coup d'état in 2019 that had destroyed institutions, brought extreme violence and repression and had threatened to erase economic and social progress. In October 2020, however, democracy and the rule of law had been restored, and his Government was able to participate in the work of the United Nations with a renewed proactive spirit. The first voluntary review had been presented in July 2021 and would serve as the basis for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

25. Recovery from a crisis should address its cause. The global situation had widened inequities and shown the selfishness of human beings and countries; such attitudes must be overcome, in order to lend new momentum to multilateral mechanisms to tackle challenges as an international community. Institutions lacked the capacity to respond to extraordinary threats; not even the urgency of the current crises had led to the abandonment of unilateral coercive measures and other forms of interventionism. All possible ways of working together should be employed in the interests of promoting recovery and achieving the Goals. However, without additional predictable financing, the transfer of sustainable technology and capacity-building in line with national priorities, there would be no recovery and no preparedness for future crises. Effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda required immediate debt relief mechanisms for developing countries.

26. Food systems must serve the people, rather than treating them as cogs in an unfair and unsustainable system of production and consumption. Food must be produced in harmony with nature, as noted by the Secretary-General in his statement of action at the Food Systems Summit. The establishment, through national dialogues, of the role of indigenous agriculture and family farming in building a sustainable and resilient food system was welcome. Partnerships and greater commitment were needed for action at all levels. Although climate change was likely the greatest threat to the Earth, the twenty-sixth session of the Conference

of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change would be meaningless without action based on climate justice and the full application of the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and of equity. Structural solutions should continue to be sought to the crises faced by humanity. He urged all States to take an ambitious approach to the Committee's work.

27. **Ms. González Carrillo** (Chile) said that the current climate and health crises had demonstrated the importance of multilateralism as a tool to for global results. Climate change must be tackled with the sense of responsibility and urgency demanded by society, science and the planet. To close the ambition gap and achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, she called on all States that had not done so to present new, strengthened nationally determined contributions. Domestic efforts included setting the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, the closure of coal-fired power plants by 2040, a new energy efficiency law and promotion of the use of green hydrogen and its derivatives. Her Government was committed to working through partnerships to ensure the well-being of current and future generations. Multi-stakeholder partnerships and alliances were particularly important to boosting international cooperation in science, research, technology and innovation.

28. Connectivity, while essential to bridging the digital divide, was not sufficient to mitigate the socioeconomic inequalities that affected access to information, health care, education and employment. Universal access to the Internet was a public policy goal, however, given its potential to foster sustainable human development. A sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic required the promotion and protection of an open, rule-based multilateral economic order that fostered free trade and integration. Renewed international cooperation must take into consideration the needs of middle-income countries and rethink the development model. There was a need to move beyond the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita criteria for the allocation of development resources. More resilient economies required the integration of women in the labour market and the equitable distribution of care responsibilities and unpaid domestic work. The gender digital divide must also be bridged, notably through the Regional Alliance for the Digitalization of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Committee played a legitimate and fundamental role in establishing multilateral policy guidelines on macroeconomic, social and environmental matters and consensus should remain the key mechanism for the adoption of resolutions.

29. **Mr. Tōnē** (Tonga) said that the theme of the session was particularly timely in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the worsening effects of climate change and the commitment to accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and he looked forward to discussions on climate change, renewable energy, disaster risk reduction and the oceans. Climate change remained the greatest threat faced by the Pacific. Tonga was particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, which was eroding capacities for resilience, and to natural disasters, and was therefore dedicated to accelerated action to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 13. He welcomed the finalization of the multidimensional vulnerability index for small island developing States. The oceans played a pivotal role in the sustainable development of Pacific nations, and their health had an impact on food security, livelihoods and ecosystems. His Government was committed to exploring all possibilities for the successful pursuit of Goal 14. Although his country contributed less than 1 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, it was determined to achieve a sustainable energy future and was committed to reducing the use of imported fuels and promoting renewable energy. Welcoming the commitments made by other nations, he urged major emitters to implement robust strategies to curb greenhouse gas emissions and achieve net zero carbon by 2050.

30. **Mr. Pérez Ayestarán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the Committee's discussions would be decisive in moving towards robust economic recovery for all following the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As an unprecedented crisis that had disrupted all spheres of life, the pandemic had laid bare global inequalities and threatened to reverse development gains, particularly in the global South. The pandemic and other global challenges – including climate change and international financial and economic issues – should be addressed through international cooperation and solidarity based on a revitalized multilateralism through the 2030 Agenda. The international situation presented an opportunity to ensure that the decisions of international financial institutions were more democratic, transparent and inclusive, in order to foster a more just and equitable financial and trade system, rather than one dominated by a few privileged countries, to the detriment of others.

31. Although the Secretary-General had warned that the world was far from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, his Government remained committed to leaving no one behind, the eradication of poverty in all its forms and manifestations and to achieving the Goals, which were fully integrated in

national development plans and policies. That endeavour was particularly challenging because his country had suffered from the additional blow of systematic aggression from the Government of the United States of America, through the criminal blockade against his country that violated the Charter of the United Nations and all norms of international law. That policy of economic terrorism involved pillaging his country's assets abroad and denying access to its legally permitted special drawing rights with the aim of committing an act of extermination against the Venezuelan people. He called once more for the immediate cessation of that cruel and inhumane neocolonial policy, particularly in the context of the current pandemic, since it hindered the achievement of the Goals, widened inequality between peoples and was a driver of inequality, social exclusion and systemic racism.

32. Since the planet was running out of time, he appealed to the international community and all multilateral organizations to urgently tackle climate change through measures for resilience and adaptation. He further called for developed countries to comply with their obligations to cut greenhouse gas emissions and for the expansion of South-South cooperation.

33. **Ms. Squeff** (Argentina) said that, while the international community was in the midst of a three-fold crisis of global inequity, COVID-19 and climate change, it had an opportunity to rebuild its societies to make them more just, inclusive and egalitarian. COVID-19 vaccines should be considered global public goods and she therefore welcomed the patent proposals made at the World Trade Organization, which would promote the production and local development of vaccines, and competition within the field. The current economic crisis had a disproportionate impact on developing countries, which were calling for the development of multidimensional poverty measurement scales to determine eligibility for concessional financing and international cooperation. The Debt Service Suspension Initiative, although welcome, was a temporary and insufficient measure that did not address the substantive issue of debt relief and restructuring. She called for the expansion to vulnerable middle-income countries of the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative. An inclusive multilateral agreement that tackled the restructuring of sovereign debt, including that held by middle-income countries, should be developed, based on General Assembly resolution [69/319](#) on the basic principles of sovereign debt restructuring processes and General Assembly resolution [68/304](#) towards the establishment

of a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructuring processes.

34. Expressing her delegation's commitment to climate action and negotiations held under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, it looked to a successful twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties. Her Government's third nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement would present a more ambitious target than that of the previous year. Balanced progress was needed on all three pillars of mitigation, adaptation and financing, and emissions reduction efforts should allow for development based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and taking into account countries' vulnerabilities and different capacities and circumstances.

35. In view of her Government's involvement in work on food systems at the international and regional levels, she called for gradual moves towards sustainability in food production systems through national decisions based on each nation's economic and social reality. No single development model served all nations. Decisions on the sustainability of food systems must be evidence-based. The follow-up to the Food Systems Summit must not create new structures, but rather respect the existing mandates of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the other Rome-based agencies. Her Government remained committed to South-South and triangular cooperation in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to the outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

36. **Ms. Seneduangdeth** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the most vulnerable countries, especially those in special situations, had been affected the worst during the COVID-19 pandemic by rising poverty and hunger, increasing debt and declining tourism, investment and trade. In addition to the pandemic, climate change, natural disasters and rising income inequality within and among countries had threatened the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly for the least developed and developing countries that relied on international trade to drive inclusive growth and poverty eradication. Like others in a special situation, her Government was doing its utmost to cushion the impact of the pandemic and maintain progress towards the Goals. Work continued towards graduation from the least developed countries, although the Committee for Development Policy had recommended an expanded preparatory period of five years with transition support measures, given the significant impact of the pandemic.

37. It was more crucial than ever for the international community to ensure a coordinated global response to the pandemic and its consequences, based on unity, solidarity and a renewed commitment to multilateralism and a holistic approach to building back better. A comprehensive socioeconomic impact assessment of the pandemic was needed, and continued technical and financial assistance from development partners, the United Nations system, international financial institutions and other stakeholders was required to help national Governments address the impact of the crisis, safeguard progress made and prepare for future crises. As part of its commitment to the work of the United Nations, his Government had presented its candidacy for membership of the Economic and Social Council for the term 2023–2025.

38. **Mr. Amorín** (Uruguay) said that the presentation of its third voluntary national review in July 2021 was evidence of his Government's commitment to sustainable development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The fourth voluntary national review would be presented at the high-level political forum in 2022. While domestic strengths such as respect for the rule of law, the protection of human rights and transparency in public administration contributed to the development process, support from the international community on all fronts was essential. Uruguay was a staunch advocate of multilateralism, on the understanding that pooled efforts would, among other things, enable progress on the eradication of poverty, promote global development and care for the environment. The fight against climate change was inextricably linked to other contemporary challenges. The Paris Agreement should be defended and implemented, and substantial commitments on emissions reductions should be agreed at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

39. In an unequal and unfair world, the institutional capacity of the United Nations must continue to be strengthened to tackle the challenges of feeding the world, preserving the environment and conserving natural resources. The commitments made at the Food Systems Summit should be applauded and national dialogues recognized as a pathway to reflect on how to make policy changes that incorporated gender and other considerations to improve food systems. He urged the United Nations to work on the basis of the principles of universality and eligibility to support the economic and social development of all Member States. He called on international financial institutions to consider how countries were classified by income, since such classification was often based on biased criteria, did not

take into account the economic and social realities of countries and used the outdated mechanism of GDP. A multidimensional classification system was needed instead, that would make it easier to adequately classify countries and identify structural limitations to the development of high-income countries.

40. **Mr. Kallis Baldrich** (Andorra) said that, given the challenge that the COVID-19 pandemic had posed to societies, he aligned himself with the statement by Mexico on equitable access to vaccines to ensure sustainable and resilient development. The pandemic had shown the need for less individualism, egoism and confrontation, and more cooperation, resilience, empathy and solidarity. Reconstruction was needed on several planes: health care, the economy, the environment and immigration. Patterns of work, mobility and consumption had been called into question. The climate crisis and related mitigation and adaptation activities presented a shared challenge, and required a stronger, more inclusive multilateral system in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations, as noted by the Secretary-General in *Our Common Agenda*. Combating climate change was a key concern domestically, in which young people were involved, and domestic sustainable development policy included a focus on energy transition. Biodiversity was another key area of activity; his Government had presented the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization with the candidacy of Andorra to become the first country considered a biosphere reserve. A bill on the circular economy sought to optimize the use of natural resources and reduce environmental impact, which would help meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

41. As global hunger increased, food production and consumption systems needed urgent reform. Food loss and waste must be avoided to bring about more just, sustainable and healthy food production, processing, distribution and consumption for all. Digital technology was essential to achieving the Goals; the digital divide must be addressed. Post-pandemic recovery offered an opportunity for real transformation.

42. **Mr. Ratsimandresy** (Madagascar) said that the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly presented an opportunity for developing countries to relaunch and pursue the 2030 Agenda. Although encouraging results had been seen in a number of areas related to the 2030 Agenda and at United Nations conferences that addressed financial, trade, environmental and social issues, the pace of implementation must be accelerated in view of the urgency of the challenges to sustainable development, particularly for developing countries. The theme for the session was therefore timely and would guide discussions in a context in which the Committee's

work on issues related to development was more important than ever. The Committee itself should be revitalized in order to address the 13 items on its agenda, consider the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As part of his Government's commitment to the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, and notably as a member of the Economic and Social Council, it had presented its second voluntary national review at the high-level political forum in 2021. The pandemic had not managed to prevent development efforts or divert development objectives; it should be used, through multilateral efforts, to help countries take charge of their future, as his Government was doing through projects for universal health care and the construction of infrastructure and a new city.

43. With respect to the climate crisis, the preservation of the natural world must not be ignored. The countries most vulnerable to climate change, owing to their economic or geographical situation, included Madagascar and were predominantly found in the global South. One project that his Government had embarked on would ensure that water was available for agriculture in the southern region of his country, in the interests of creating jobs and promoting local resilience.

44. *Ms. Micael (Eritrea), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

45. **Mr. Abraheem** (Libya) said that with less than 10 years to go to 2030, the COVID-19 pandemic had thrown up numerous obstacles to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Millions were out of work, children were being deprived of their educations and access to health services was severely curtailed in developing countries and even some developed countries. His Government continued to make the Goals a priority in the face of all those challenges, which were further exacerbated in Libya by political divisions, security vulnerabilities and dependence on oil revenue. True progress could only come with resolution of the conflict and an end to foreign intervention in Libyan internal affairs.

46. Libya was among the countries that saw a significant proportion of its resources drained through illicit financial flows to safe havens. Greater international cooperation was needed to stem those flows and return the stolen funds to their countries of origin so they could be invested in development. His country also suffered from illegal migration, organized crime and human trafficking. Illegal migration needed to be addressed at the source, with the countries of destination providing the countries of origin with assistance for local development. He urged neighbouring countries to crack

down on human trafficking gangs and called on the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to monitor the sources of financing that fuelled illegal migration

47. **Ms. Marinkov** (Serbia) said that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development was crucial to facing the challenges of global economic instability, growing social inequality and climate change. The Committee must focus its attention on the 2030 Agenda for a more just and humane world. Extensive measures had been taken to promote implementation at the national level, including the provision of funding and drafting of bills relating to the 2030 Agenda and the priority Sustainable Development Goals. She welcomed the ongoing process of reform of the United Nations development system and agreed that joint and coordinated responses to capacity development were more necessary than ever. The internal capacities of the development system must be critically reviewed in order to support countries to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. The constructive cooperation of the United Nations country team in Serbia was appreciated and the development cooperation framework for the period up to 2025 was in the final stages of harmonization.

48. The COVID-19 pandemic called for all nations to work together and help each other. Her Government had made extensive provisions for vaccination and had taken steps to acquire the technology to produce two types of COVID-19 vaccine, in order to boost global vaccine access. The pandemic presented an opportunity to combat climate change and move towards a green and resilient recovery. Her Government had taken steps in that regard with the adoption of a law on climate change and planned to submit a revised nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement, alongside its contributions to global, regional and local environmental protection initiatives.

49. **Mr. Tirumurti** (India) said that, in the context of the continuing COVID-19 crisis, which had disproportionately impacted the global South, and a slow initial reaction from international institutions, the international community needed to come together to combat the pandemic and build a resilient recovery. Digital technology would be increasingly useful in the context of building back better and had been deployed nationally for inclusive, integrated and equitable development and service delivery. A digital vaccine delivery platform, CoWIN, had helped to deliver the national vaccination programme and had been offered as a global public good. The digital divide was being bridged by leveraging technology for low-cost solutions that were designed to empower all citizens, especially

women. For vaccines to reach every corner of the world, supply chains of raw materials must be kept open. Indian production capacity would be ramped up as new Indian vaccines came on stream.

50. India was the only G20 country that was on course to meet the targets under the Paris Agreement; the share of renewable energy in the national energy mix had reached 38 per cent and efforts in that regard continued. It was important to understand the implications of net zero; a global net zero should be based on the principles of common but differentiated responsibility and of equity. Since developing countries would peak later, given their sustainable development paths, developed countries should engage in net minus, in order to leave space for developing countries to grow. Developed countries needed to show that they were on course to achieve their commitments for 2030 before engaging in discussion on 2050. A serious approach to climate change could be demonstrated in the provision by developed countries of the promised \$100 billion for climate action. There could be no cherry picking from the inclusive and comprehensive structure built around the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; his Government would not favour any attempts that went against a Member State-driven process and were not in the interest of developing countries.

51. The Indian contribution to global climate partnership included the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure. His Government remained committed to partnerships with developing countries and working in the spirit of South-South cooperation, especially with least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Although funds had been diverted to humanitarian assistance, immediate needs should not completely displace medium-term recovery and progress. Harmful forces, such as terrorism, hate, extremism, the infodemic and challenges to pluralism, democracy and human rights had increased, and needed to be tackled in order to set countries on the path to resilience and recovery.

52. **Ms. Volska** (Ukraine) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had delivered a harsh lesson on the need to strengthen international efforts to provide truly sustainable solutions for the future. The most vulnerable countries had suffered the most severe consequences of the pandemic, although middle-income countries, especially those with high debt levels, also found themselves in difficult situations. Food security was among the issues to be tackled by the Committee at the present session, and the Food Systems Summit was just at the beginning of work to shape that agenda based on past experience, scientific developments and global

consensus. As a proactive participant in efforts on food security, Ukraine had joined in a number of coalitions on action resulting from the Food Systems Summit and contributed to food security in countries around the world through food exports. No restrictions had been imposed on the export of basic products during the pandemic.

53. To simplify international trade procedures and prevent the creation of new trade barriers, she called on Member States to consider establishing an emergency cooperation mechanism to coordinate action on possible bilateral trade restrictions due to epidemics and other natural or anthropogenic disasters. The mechanism would be aimed at prevention, detection and rapid response relating to emergencies that threatened food security or other interests of a State. Other priorities included the development of an efficient agricultural system and global confidence in food standards.

54. Digitalization was a key vector of Ukrainian economic development, and affordable and convenient services had become a reality for the population. Digital services would tackle queues, corruption and time-wasting. The flagship government application, “Diia”, was part of efforts to digitize all State services by 2024. Efforts to encourage digital transformation extended to the humanitarian sphere – with the launch of electronic certificates for internally displaced persons – and included a national legislative framework and hub city to support the development of the ICT sector, and a process of integration in the digital single market of the European Union.

55. Since no country could achieve sustainable development without sustainable peace and security, universal goals on hunger and climate change should be linked to goals aimed at bringing about the peaceful resolution of conflicts. A constructive multi-stakeholder dialogue would facilitate the broadest possible cooperation to ensure the consideration of emerging sustainable development challenges and how best to address them.

56. **Mr. Kpukumu** (Sierra Leone) said that, in a time of great uncertainty, the COVID-19 pandemic had overturned development gains, particularly in the least developed countries, and spotlighted the need for global collective action on all fronts to combat the pandemic and implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The efforts of the international community, the United Nations system and the World Health Organization to help countries tackle the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 were appreciated and should be continued, including through technical support to assist with the recovery plans of

developing economies, and least developed countries in particular, and to achieve the Goals. The national development plan for the period up to 2023 prioritized human development capital and had identified Goal 4 on education and Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions as accelerators, with a particular focus on efforts in those areas. Declining levels of official development assistance (ODA) for the least developed countries prior to the pandemic had limited liquidity and placed constraints on external solvency; robust support and the adequate fulfilment of commitments to scale up the percentage of ODA given to the least developed countries was needed, alongside significant progress in the establishment of an investment promotion regime in the least developed countries in order to build back better.

57. **Mr. Al Busaidi** (Oman) said that implementation of the 2030 Agenda would depend on adequate international support, technology transfer and capacity-building for developing States. The COVID-19 pandemic had only highlighted the need for greater international consensus on how to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on schedule. He reminded the Committee of the importance of the agenda item on the permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, and called on Israel, the occupying Power, to desist immediately from plundering such resources and any other activities that violated international law.

58. **Mr. Shilla** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the loss of loved ones and social and economic disruption reminded all countries of their vulnerability, regardless of size, wealth or geography. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was not evenly spread, however, as the developing world was worst affected. Well-coordinated joint efforts were needed, including equity in access to vaccines, in order to build resilience and recover from the pandemic. The United Nations development system was a platform for supporting Member States’ development efforts. Resident coordinators, as an independent and apolitical system, should primarily focus on development in the host country and support the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, in keeping with their mandate, and must adhere to the principles of national leadership, national ownership and non-politicization, and grant highest priority to the ending of poverty. In that regard, financial independence would be key; a sustainable funding mechanism, that did not depend heavily on voluntary contributions, should be considered.

59. The 2030 Agenda continued to be mainstreamed in national development plans, which had led to robust economic growth over the previous decade and a slowdown in growth registered only in 2020, due to the challenges of the pandemic. Climate change was one of the greatest challenges to development efforts. His Government had taken mitigation and adaptation measures to address its effects, including introducing a system for planting trees and using natural forest as a carbon sink, and reducing the domestic use of firewood and charcoal. Regulatory and legislative reviews had improved the business environment to encourage investment.

60. **Mr. Lungu** (Zambia) said that the Sustainable Development Goals were incorporated in national development plans and significant milestones had been recorded in the areas of health, gender, energy and education. Nonetheless, making progress towards the Goals had not been easy. The COVID-19 pandemic had compounded existing vulnerabilities and inequalities in all economic spheres, disrupted agriculture, trade and supply chains, and further strained education and health systems, particularly in parts of the country with inadequate ICT systems. Multilateral and global efforts to make safe and effective vaccines available, especially to the most vulnerable countries, must be accelerated. The support received through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility and the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust were appreciated. His Government intended to vaccinate at least 70 per cent of its population and to scale up efforts to tackle vaccine hesitancy. A COVID-19 needs assessment had been made in collaboration with the United Nations and other development partners that had considered national development plans and the building of resilience in the short- and medium-term.

61. Given the interconnectedness of water, food and energy, as pointed out by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs during the present general debate, the outcomes of the Food Systems Summit and the High-level Dialogue on Energy would be used to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda. Agriculture and energy were areas of particular focus for national action in that regard.

62. **Mr. Omar** (Somalia) said that his Government remained determined to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Efforts in areas of interest to the Committee included action to improve access to digital services and steps to improve biodiversity and achieve sustainable agricultural cultivation. The young people of Somalia, as more than 70 per cent of the population, were a beacon of hope for today and for the future. A national social protection

policy had been introduced to tackle poverty and comprehensive reforms had helped to capitalize on gains made. Re-engagement with international financial institutions to address economic challenges and the implementation of financial and economic reforms had sought to enhance State legitimacy and improve macroeconomic management and performance. A more diverse and competitive economy that was capable of taking advantage of emerging regional trade opportunities was the best route to enhancing growth and mobilizing revenue in the medium and long term. Federal priorities included the protection of the environment from harm. Climate change had been included in the national development plan as a constraint in the areas of security and the rule of law and economic development, and as a major cause of poverty. More effective environmental governance was also a priority under that plan, alongside the effect of climate change on traditional livestock and agricultural livelihoods.

63. **Mr. Cherif** (Tunisia) said that COVID-19 had shown that all States shared a common fate despite their differences, even as it exposed the fragility of the cooperation mechanisms needed to confront such crises. Global economic disparities and the digital divide were forcing many developing countries to choose between fighting the pandemic and staying on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

64. Tunisia had presented its second voluntary national review to the high-level political forum in 2021. It remained committed to the 2030 Agenda despite the pandemic and also in the face of regional challenges to development posed by terrorism, illegal migration and transnational organized crime. His Government was pressing ahead with institutional and economic reforms intended to reinforce the rule of law, promote good governance and provide a decent life to all citizens.

65. Poverty eradication and food security should remain priorities in the face of the pandemic's adverse impacts on agricultural production. He welcomed the Food Systems Summit just held during the high-level week of the current session and stressed the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in correcting global food imbalances. A transparent and fair system was needed to combat corruption and illicit financial flows. Greater cooperation was also needed to fight the effects of climate change and mitigate its economic and social impacts. In that connection, his delegation looked forward to the outcomes of the upcoming twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

66. **Ms. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana) said that the election of an all-female Bureau of the Second Committee was historic and should be a positive harbinger as efforts continued to achieve gender equality in all spheres.

67. The many global challenges faced by the international community presented opportunities to strengthen, recalibrate and reinvent the solutions needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to take lives and paralyze economies, thus endangering the sustainable development agenda. Resilience and recovery from the pandemic began with a global vaccination policy; vaccines must be treated as a global public good and distributed equitably, and there must be an end to vaccination discrimination, particularly in a context of continued vaccine hesitancy.

68. Climate change had the capacity to inflict even greater destruction than COVID-19. She called for ambitious action to reduce emissions in order to limit warming to 1.5 C. Small island developing States, and low-lying States in particular were at great risk and were already experiencing the impact of climate change. Guyana was contributing to efforts to reduce emissions, even though the burden of reductions was not shared equitably and despite its status as a net carbon sink thanks to its forests. The failure of developed countries to uphold their commitment to mobilizing \$100 billion for climate action in developing countries was a concern and should be addressed at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

69. She added her voice to the calls for a multidimensional vulnerability index, primarily to determine access to finance for small island developing States and other vulnerable countries. Such an index had the potential to provide a more practical illustration of countries' vulnerabilities, capabilities and needs, and could help to shape their development path and build resilience.

70. **Archbishop Caccia** (Observer for the Holy See) said that making sustainable development a reality by 2030 demanded tremendous and concerted efforts on the part of the international community, as did other crucial commitments, such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework. Alongside the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on development, it had exposed the vulnerability of health-care systems, exacerbated inequality and had severe repercussions on the global economy, and in turn on education, livelihoods and food security. The most serious crisis, however, was the crisis of human relationships, which flowed from an anthropological vision dominated by individualism,

indifference and a culture of waste, and obliviousness to human dignity.

71. In order to emerge from the pandemic and build back better, the international community must find a renewed sense of solidarity and true multilateralism. Resilience required working together to make vaccines available to everyone, everywhere, and ensure universal access to essential health care. It also called for an examination of the fragility and shortfalls in economic systems that had pushed millions into poverty. Economic models should be advanced that placed the individual and the common good at their centre and integrated environmental considerations; social protection was crucial to millions of workers, especially those in the informal economy and migrant workers. The pandemic had also highlighted the crucial role of the family in human development, since in many cases the family had been the main or only source of support during that time. The international community must provide more tailored assistance to families through family-oriented policies and programmes.

72. Given the Committee's critical role in giving political guidance to the United Nations system and to the international community as a whole, its revitalization was critical. Greater attention must be paid to promoting and safeguarding the mandates of United Nations entities and forums. Attempts to break down the helpful division of labour among committees, commissions, meetings and processes, in order to turn them all into bodies that focused on a limited number of disputed issues, were a cause of concern. Specific considerations of human rights and fundamental freedoms were best left to discussions within the Third Committee. Any changes to the Second Committee's working methods should be made following inclusive and transparent consultation with its membership. The intergovernmental nature of the Committee must remain the cornerstone of its work, including deliberations on working methods and best practices. The special circumstances in which the Committee had been operating due to the pandemic and any consequent adjustments to its traditional modalities should not be used to change its mandate, which must continue to be the achievement of sustainable development in its three indivisible dimensions. The Committee's revitalization was crucial to providing the United Nations and the international community with a much-needed spirit of consensus and solidarity.

73. **Ms. Babikyan** (Armenia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Azerbaijan had made reference in her statement to incendiary and manipulative rhetoric and threats of the use of force to create so-called corridors, notably the so-

called Zangezur Corridor, as a continuation of the policy of land blockade and unilateral coercive measures that ran counter to international law and the relevant arrangements, and were detrimental to peace and sustainable development in the region. The trilateral statements of 9 November 2020 and 11 January 2021 on the unblocking of all economic and transport connections in the region did not contain any reference to the Zangezur Corridor and the incendiary rhetoric and threats of force to create such a corridor contradicted the spirit of those trilateral statements and further undermined the security and stability of the region.

74. In attempting to divert the Committee through fabrications on transport connectivity, Azerbaijan and its kin country were seeking to isolate Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh from the outer world. That window-dressing exercise came from the representative of a country that had, amidst the global pandemic, on 27 September 2020, launched a large-scale military offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh that had caused massive suffering, the destruction of critical civilian infrastructure and mass displacement. The aggression was aimed at violating the right to life and the right to development, among other rights, of the people of Artsakh. The targeted destruction of civilian infrastructure had heavily impacted the capacity of the authorities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had caused a major outbreak of the virus. Encouraged by a sense of impunity in the aftermath of hostilities, Azerbaijan had resorted to military provocations aimed at the Syunik region of Armenia, which violated the rights of border communities. Support for Azerbaijan in that regard would further encourage the ruling regime to consolidate the consequences of its aggression, which had been accompanied by war crimes, atrocities and the mass displacement of the indigenous Armenian population.

75. **Ms. Ahmadova** (Azerbaijan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement by the delegate of Armenia was another failed attempt to deny the facts and mislead the international community by spreading false information. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan had started in the late 1980s with the unlawful and groundless territorial claims of Armenia, which had unleashed a full-scale war against Azerbaijan in the early 1990s. Serious violations of international humanitarian law that amounted to war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide had been committed by Armenian forces and most captured cities and villages had been razed to the ground. Another act of aggression, committed by Armenia on 27 September 2020, was the logical consequence of the impunity it had enjoyed for more

than 30 years. Direct and indiscriminate attacks had been carried out by the Armenian armed forces that had killed and wounded civilians, causing thousands to flee, and had destroyed or damaged private houses and civilian infrastructure. Azerbaijan had used counter force in the exercise of its inherent right of self-defence, in accordance with article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, to end the occupation of its territories, protect its people and allow internally displaced persons to return to their homes.

76. Furthermore, the violation of principles of international law related to the protection and management of water resources in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan and at the transboundary level and the severe ecocide committed by Armenia posed a serious threat to the environment of the entire region. The Armenian use of water reservoirs as tools of political influence had been recognized by the Council of Europe in 2016. The polluting of Okhchuchay river, in which some foreign companies were regrettably participating, had led to the irreversible degradation of the river ecosystem. The natural resources of formerly occupied lands had been exploited by Armenia and exported to the international markets. Companies from a number of countries had been identified as having illegally exploited the natural resources of Azerbaijan, among other illegal activities in the formerly occupied territories, and would be held accountable through legal action.

77. The distortions and misinterpretations contained in the statement of the delegate of Armenia, along with the Armenian Government's refusal to implement the provisions of the trilateral statements with regard to the restoration of all economic and transport links in the region, contradicted the pronouncements made in the same statement of readiness for constructive dialogue.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.