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Summary record of the 6th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 7 October 2021, at 10 a.m.

- Chair:* Mr. Doualeh (Djibouti)
- later:* Ms. Carlé (Vice-Chair) (Belgium)
- later:* Mr. Doualeh (Djibouti)

Contents

General debate (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Chan Valverde** (Costa Rica), speaking also on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Japan, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Peru, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Switzerland, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the European Union and its member States, said that Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector needed to come together to achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and fulfil the promise of leaving no one behind.

2. The participation of civil society and human rights defenders in the Committee was decisive, as their experience, expertise and presence on the ground improved the relevance and outcomes of the Committee's work. It was therefore troubling that, during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, such actors had found it difficult to access and engage in the work of the United Nations owing to limited access to premises and virtual meetings, unequal access to registration and a lack of information and opportunities to engage with Member States and other stakeholders.

3. The report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights (A/HRC/48/28), which documented alleged reprisals and intimidation against 240 civil society members, activists and journalists from 45 countries, was of deep concern. It was unacceptable that voices were being silenced and that civil society representatives, including those representing minorities, women, indigenous peoples, youth and human rights defenders, were being subjected to serious human rights violations simply for cooperating with or speaking at the United Nations.

4. The Committee should lead by example and improve conditions for meaningful civil society participation and engagement with Member States. For example, the practice of convening informal consultations with civil society representatives in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council should be followed, thus setting the standard for transparency, accountability and partnerships between Member States and relevant stakeholders.

5. With regard to the concerns expressed about the need for an agreed framework and consultative process

in the lead-up to meetings, those delegations were of the view that the Chair, working with the Bureau, had the authority to convene such an informal meeting in consultation with Member States. In that regard, the Chair's announcement on the organization of such a meeting with civil society was welcome.

6. It was regrettable that civil society's access to the premises of the United Nations had been limited by pandemic-related emergency public health measures. The legitimate need for such measures should not be used as a pretext to hinder the access of civil society organizations to the United Nations or to punish those who cooperated with the Organization.

7. The increase in conference services for in-person meetings at Headquarters was welcome. Civil society access to relevant spaces of interaction and digital safe spaces for remote participation was more important than ever. The efforts of the Bureau to allocate adequate spaces for civil society engagement in the general debate and interactive dialogues of the Committee, including for in-person participation, were appreciated. Despite ongoing impediments to the achievement of fully inclusive virtual meetings, such as connectivity and language barriers, digital technologies could be used to provide a broader audience with timely information on the Committee's work.

8. Lastly, she wished to acknowledge other important steps taken by the United Nations to support civil society, including the launch of new system-wide guidance on the protection and promotion of civic space, and the Secretariat's efforts to ensure business continuity, the availability of services and most importantly the progressive return to in-person meetings.

9. **Mr. Ladeb** (Tunisia), speaking also on behalf of Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal and South Africa, said that those countries had come together to make a joint statement because of their shared emphasis on the values of multilateralism, consensus and constructive dialogue when advocating the causes of human rights, gender equality and sustainable development. In recent years, progress on those issues had been put to the test by narratives that sought to create a dichotomy between human rights and development and between multilateral cooperation and sovereignty. The principles of multilateralism, consensus and constructive dialogue were not only equally important, but also mutually reinforcing.

10. The COVID-19 pandemic, which had had an unprecedented impact on all rights worldwide, was proof that no one was safe until everyone was safe.

Levels of domestic violence and harmful practices had surged and access to education, justice and health-care services had been disrupted, especially for women and girls. The pandemic had placed a heavy financial burden on States, had revealed the medical and digital divides between and within countries and had disproportionately affected vulnerable groups, especially women and girls, who were affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and those left furthest behind. Unless properly addressed, the repercussions of the pandemic would continue to undermine the resilience of societies.

11. Collective efforts were needed to address existing challenges, promote and protect human rights and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The values of multilateralism, consensus and constructive dialogue were universal. Only by working together constructively and ambitiously could States create a better world for future generations.

12. Their cross-regional group of countries from the global South would explore specific actions to “push back against the pushbacks” and stood ready to engage, individually and as a group, in the relevant processes in the United Nations and in meaningful dialogues and partnerships with all stakeholders in order to pursue their common objectives and hence bring about gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, realize human rights and achieve sustainable development.

13. **Mr. Pérez Ayestarán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, nearly two years into the worst pandemic in a hundred years, the inequities between the global North and South were growing by the day. Moreover, at a time when cooperation and solidarity should prevail, the illegal, cruel and immoral imposition of unilateral coercive measures against entire peoples and economies of developing countries was exacerbating the suffering of more than 2 billion people, including 30 million Venezuelans.

14. The criminal and suffocating application of such sanctions against his country had intensified in recent years. While failing to achieve its aims, the economic coercion by extremist and supremacist groups of the Government of the United States continued to prevent timely and effective access to medicines and treatments, medical equipment, food and basic commodities, fuel, transportation and financial services, as well as COVID-19 vaccines.

15. No representative of the Government of the United States was in a position to judge the internal situation in any Member State, much less to impart lessons on human rights, when it was that very same country and

its interventionist policy that historically bore responsibility for wars, genocides, massacres and the merciless treatment of migrants. One could not claim to be a champion of human rights while at the same time deliberately and systematically violating such rights en masse, in what amounted to an act of extermination, as provided for under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The United States regime was the greatest violator of human rights in the history of the world and posed a real threat to world peace, which ran counter to the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and all its pillars.

16. His delegation hoped that, confronted with the evidence of the failure of their measures, the United States, the European Union and certain Latin American countries that had promoted the application of such measures would finally come to their senses and the so-called sanctions would be lifted completely and immediately. They had caused so much pain to the Venezuelan people, as had been recorded in recent reports by independent experts from the United Nations system.

17. His country’s contribution to the universal human rights system was long-standing and had been recognized by the international community. In September 2020, his Government had renewed the memorandum of understanding to further strengthen its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and it maintained a significant presence in the meetings and mechanisms of the various treaty bodies.

18. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was preparing to participate in the third cycle of the universal periodic review in 2022, which constituted the preferred forum in which to foster dialogue, cooperation and trust, with the participation of the State concerned, unlike other arbitrary and unilateral processes that had a clear political bias. In that regard, his delegation categorically rejected the politicization and instrumentalization of human rights to advance petty neo-colonial interests and policies, which was completely inconsistent with the spirit that should guide the promotion and protection of such rights.

19. Lastly, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had presented its candidacy for election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2023–2025.

20. **Ms. Mudallali** (Lebanon) said that, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, progress towards gender equality had stalled and, in such States as Afghanistan, had regressed completely. The situation was unacceptable, especially considering the struggle faced by women everywhere to achieve gender equality.

21. Women journalists and media workers had been particularly targeted. In a recent comparative study of violence against female reporters and male reporters covering the protests in Lebanon in 2019, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) had highlighted that female reporters had been disproportionately targeted by physical and online violence, which tended to be of a sexual nature. Violence against journalists, media workers, civil society activists and reporters should not be tolerated. All such persons should be protected so that they could work in a free and safe environment.

22. The pandemic had also taken a devastating toll on education, robbing children of over 1.8 trillion in class hours. Furthermore, as a result of the devaluation of the Lebanese pound by more than 90 per cent since 2019, teachers' salaries had been hit hard and many parents were no longer able to cover the cost of education. The right to education was sacred, particularly for women and girls, therefore every effort was needed to ensure that an entire generation did not fall behind.

23. The tragic port blast in Beirut and the unprecedented economic and financial collapse had led to a severe mental health crisis in Lebanon. In order to build back better, States needed to invest in and include mental health care in their response and their recovery plans.

24. Unfortunately, the multiple crises had also had disastrous implications for the over 1.5 million Syrian nationals displaced in Lebanon, with 9 out of 10 Syrian refugees having fallen below the extreme poverty line – a 60 per cent increase since 2019. Lebanon could no longer bear the brunt of the displacement crisis, especially in such unprecedented times.

25. **Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt) said that international solidarity was under threat as a result of the increasingly toxic atmosphere of polarization, with certain countries continuing to establish themselves as arbiters and evaluators of others. Any attempt to impose specific priorities on all nations, regardless of the socioeconomic context, was doomed to failure.

26. Greater efforts were needed to counter racism, discrimination, xenophobia and hate speech. In that context, Egypt welcomed the adoption of the political declaration at the high-level meeting to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the proclamation of 4 February as the International Day of Human Fraternity and the adoption of General Assembly resolution [75/258](#) on promoting a culture of peace and tolerance to safeguard religious sites. Egypt was

committed to promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence between all cultures and religions.

27. It was evident that systematic efforts were being made to elevate certain human rights while ignoring and nullifying others. Such discrimination based on a particular agenda did nothing to serve the realization of all human rights, which were interdependent and indivisible. There was no justification for systematically disregarding and downgrading economic and social rights and the right to development.

28. There was a dire need to recognize the COVID-19 vaccine as a global public good. While a number of countries and platforms, such as the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, had contributed to promoting vaccine accessibility and affordability through bilateral and multilateral channels, vaccine equity was still far from being reached, particularly in Africa.

29. In response to the aspirations and priorities expressed by its citizens, and in line with its international human rights obligations, Egypt had launched its first national human rights strategy (2021–2026), which had been prepared in close consultation with all segments of civil society. The strategy included four main areas of activity: civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; the rights of women, children, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons; and capacity-building in the field of human rights.

30. Lastly, his country's Human Development Report for 2021 had highlighted human development and social protection as a core focus in the Government's development and human rights strategies and had fortified its commitment to the role of women as effective and equal partners, which was indispensable in achieving sustainable human development.

31. **Ms. Davaasuren** (Mongolia), speaking in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected global health, exposed underlying social, economic and environmental challenges, triggered or worsened numerous human rights problems and inequalities and jeopardized the progress made in socioeconomic development, well-being and the promotion and protection of human rights. Rather than discriminating against one another, States should combine their strengths to overcome the pandemic.

32. Her Government had taken proactive measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, to reduce its impact on socioeconomic development and to protect vulnerable groups, including by passing new legislation.

In that connection, 65 per cent of the population of Mongolia had been fully vaccinated against the disease.

33. Her Government had also adopted Vision 2050, which contained its long-term development priorities. Great importance was attached to stepping up governmental reform at all levels of the public and private sectors and to reducing corruption, including through e-transition, which was the most practical mechanism for ensuring transparency, accountability, effective service and good governance tools. Her Government aimed to make at least 90 per cent of all public services available on an integrated e-system and strove to establish Mongolia as a digital nation in the coming years.

34. The advancement of all women and girls and the protection of their rights remained a key priority for her Government, which had been strongly committed to realizing women's rights to economic empowerment and decent work over the past 25 years. Legislation on gender equality had been strengthened in recent years through the adoption of laws on family and domestic violence, maternal and child health and gender equality. Furthermore, Mongolia remained firmly committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

35. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, justice and equality were at the heart of her Government's policies. A wide range of legal reforms were under way with a view to harmonizing national laws with international human rights norms and standards. In April 2021, the parliament had passed a law on the status of human rights defenders, making Mongolia the first country in Asia to provide them with a protection framework. In addition, the parliament was reviewing her country's implementation of its international human rights obligations with a view to developing policy recommendations that would enhance national reporting and facilitate further legal reforms.

36. Mongolia, which worked actively with human rights treaty bodies, had extended a standing invitation since 2004 to all special procedure mandate holders and had received several visits from special rapporteurs and working groups. As a supporter of the universal periodic review process, her Government would make every effort to implement the recommendations made during its third cycle of the review.

37. **Mr. de Rivière** (France) said that his country deplored the increase in violations of human rights and humanitarian law in crisis zones.

38. The civilian population in Afghanistan must be protected, and it was crucial for the Taliban to fulfil its commitments, particularly with regard to the rights of women and girls and the granting of humanitarian access.

39. France called for an immediate end to the hostilities and human rights violations in Yemen and for civilian protection and humanitarian access.

40. In Syria, the regime continued to torture persons under arbitrary detention and refugees returning to the country. Without a political solution in accordance with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), there could be no safe, dignified, voluntary and lasting return of refugees and displaced persons.

41. In Ethiopia, almost one year following the outbreak of conflict, there was an urgent need to bring an immediate end to the violence, ensure the protection of the civilian population, enable access to humanitarian aid and engage in political dialogue.

42. France was also concerned about the worsening security situation in the Central African Republic, characterized by numerous violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, committed in particular by mercenaries from the Russian private company the Wagner Group.

43. His delegation called for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to be given unhindered and independent access to Xinjiang and deplored the continually worsening situation in Hong Kong and Tibet.

44. The numerous existing challenges were testing the international system for the protection of human rights. The pandemic, climate change, biodiversity loss and the rise in socioeconomic inequality called for multilateral responses that were wholly consistent with international law, including human rights law, and that fostered a more inclusive form of cooperation on sustainable development. Moreover, the repeated violations of the rights of women and girls demanded a tangible and unequivocal response. To that end, together with Mexico, France had organized the Generation Equality Forum under the auspices of UN-Women, which had resulted in the launch of the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality. With six action coalitions and the mobilization of some \$40 billion, the plan provided an ambitious road map for achieving gender equality. More than one thousand specific commitments had been made to date, demonstrating the multilateralism through action promoted by France.

45. **Ms. Elmansouri** (Tunisia) said that, if not properly addressed, the unprecedented ramifications of

the COVID-19 pandemic for human rights and development would undermine the progress made for generations to come. The current health crisis had resulted in the deepest global recession in decades, depleting resources, driving millions into extreme poverty, disrupting access to health care and education and deepening inequality between and within countries. Its consequences had been most acutely felt by vulnerable groups, including women and girls, who suffered from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The equal distribution of COVID-19 vaccines was a prerequisite for fulfilling the right of all individuals to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

46. Tunisia remained committed to the Charter of the United Nations and to multilateralism. International cooperation should be guided by the principles of impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicization, while the promotion, protection and full exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms should be based on an open and constructive dialogue on an equal footing.

47. Her country condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and underscored that terrorism could not and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. The primary responsibility for combating terrorism lay with Member States, in accordance with the Charter and international human rights law.

48. Tunisia was committed to democracy, safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms, and strengthening the rule of law and good governance. Combating corruption and ending impunity were key to an inclusive and strong democracy.

49. Tunisia would continue to strive for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at the national and international levels. The previous week, the Prime Minister, Najla Bouden, had been tasked with forming a new Government, making her the first woman to assume such a responsibility in the history of Tunisia and the Arab world. Her appointment demonstrated the country's commitment to the full, equal, effective and meaningful participation and leadership of women at all levels of the decision-making process. Similarly, Tunisia remained committed to the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security.

50. Her Government's national action plan continued to be implemented through a number of sectorial action plans covering the nexus between the women and peace and security agenda and a range of thematic issues such as health, justice, development and the prevention of

violent extremism. A new sectorial action plan was currently being developed for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad, which represented an opportunity to mainstream the gender perspective throughout the country's foreign policy.

51. In the light of the pandemic's impact on civic space and on the safety of journalists and human rights defenders, her delegation called on the United Nations and on the Committee in particular to lead by example and ensure the meaningful participation of such groups in the Organization's processes by mitigating the challenges caused by the pandemic and by creating a safe and enabling environment free of reprisals.

52. Tunisia would continue to work constructively with its partners on the various priorities of the Committee, including through the coalition of the global South, guided by the need to preserve consensus, inclusivity, transparency and complementarity between human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and sustainable development. Only through such complementarity would it be possible to achieve progress and set the stage for a more equal, fair and inclusive world.

53. **Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) said that, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, his country had chosen a development path suited to its own national conditions and had achieved national independence and prosperity, having translated the ideals of democracy, human rights, freedom and equality into reality. China had made consistent progress in human rights, with its greatest achievement in that regard being the creation of conditions for its people to live happy lives. The progress made had brought tangible benefits to society and had been recognized around the world.

54. Human rights were universal, yet the path to their realization was diverse. With different national conditions, development stages, cultures and traditions, countries naturally explored their own paths to human rights development in line with their own characteristics. States must uphold that diversity instead of seeking to impose human rights models onto others, which was neither democratic nor feasible. Certain Western countries needed to examine their actions and amend their ways.

55. States must maintain dialogue and cooperation and uphold fairness and justice, without bullying. Some countries talked about the importance of returning to multilateralism, while forming exclusive cliques and provoking confrontation. They talked about upholding the international order, while imposing unilateral coercive measures in violation of international law and

infringing on the rights and interests of people in other countries. The world had progressed, and human rights were not a privilege enjoyed by the West. All people around the world had a right to a happy life. The power politics exhibited by some countries would not only harm the world but would also backfire eventually.

56. Once again in the Committee, the United States and a few other countries were provoking confrontation and pointing fingers at developing countries and their human rights situations, brazenly launching smear campaigns while turning a blind eye to their own problems and the terrible record of human rights violations of their allies. Such selectivity and politicization had poisoned the cooperative atmosphere at the United Nations. In total disregard of the facts, the United States and a few other countries were fabricating lies about Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, making groundless accusations against China and using human rights to interfere in its internal affairs. His Government firmly opposed such actions.

57. The accusations by the United States and a few other countries were totally unfounded, unjust and went against the prevailing trends. Rather than caring about the human rights situation in China, the real intention of such States was to sabotage his country's stability and development. Its progress had been achieved as a result of the hard work of the Chinese people, and China would never allow anyone to deprive its people of the right to development and a happy life. No external disruption could stand in the way of the country's progress.

58. It was time for the United States and a few other countries to wake up and face the global challenges, with dialogue and cooperation being the way forward in that regard. China stood ready to engage in human rights dialogue with States in good will and welcomed opinions and suggestions made in good faith. At the same time, the resolve of China to follow its own development path, defend its fundamental interests and safeguard the common interests and dignity of the wider developing world remained unshakeable.

59. **Mr. Pilipenko** (Belarus) said that his country recognized the universal, inalienable, indivisible and interrelated nature of human rights. When assessing a human rights situation, it was important to take a comprehensive approach, taking equal account of all categories of rights.

60. Belarus advocated effective cooperation on human rights issues based on constructive interaction, dialogue and respect for international law, in strict observance of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. Unfortunately, regular attempts had been made to undermine that crucial principle, resulting in egregious

incidents involving not only foreign forces, but also officials of the United Nations system. One such incident had recently occurred in Belarus: staff members of the United Nations country office had been found to have been diverting money intended for persons with disabilities to OHCHR in order to support protests in the country. To cover up that financial abuse by United Nations officials, OHCHR had portrayed them as "victims of the regime".

61. No State was exempt from human rights, nor were there any "model" or "benchmark" States. All States, to varying degrees, and taking into account national particularities, made every effort to uphold, protect and realize human rights. The progress made must be taken into account when assessing the human rights situation of each Member State and not ignored as a given or a default obligation. In that context, Belarus supported strengthening the role of the universal periodic review, which was an effective mechanism for undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the human rights situation in all Member States without exception.

62. The Republic of Belarus was a social State, as enshrined in the country's Basic Law. The interests and needs of human beings were at the heart of its State policy. Social support for older persons, persons with disabilities, veterans of the Great Patriotic War, large families and socially vulnerable groups remained the hallmark of the country's socioeconomic development in all circumstances and under all conditions. His Government had an effective system of State-targeted social assistance aimed at providing temporary material support to low-income citizens and families in difficult circumstances. State support for families, mothers and children, and measures to ensure gender equality were key areas of State social policy in Belarus and the basis of demographic security.

63. In that context, the consideration at the United Nations of the issues of health, education, the status of women, child protection, the rights of persons with disabilities, older persons and young people, the family, discrimination and combating trafficking in persons were the focus of his delegation's attention. Belarus was also actively advancing a number of those topics in the international arena, especially combating trafficking in persons and protecting the traditional family.

64. It was important to further strengthen international cooperation in combating illegal migration, drug trafficking, terrorism, extremism, corruption, money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. New forms of organized crime, including those involving the use of the information space, should also be a focus of attention. The threat posed by crimes in the field of

information and communications technology was a major concern.

65. Belarus also attached great importance to the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. Whatever they were called and however they were presented to the public, such measures flagrantly violated international law and the rights of ordinary citizens in the States against which they were imposed.

66. His country remained committed to multilateralism and to the development of a system for the promotion and protection of human rights, with a focus on making progress in the area of human rights through the development of partnerships and dialogue among all stakeholders based on the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity, without politicization or double standards. It was ready for constructive interaction on the basis of those principles with all interested Member States within the framework of the current session of the General Assembly and meetings of the Committee.

67. *Ms. Carlé (Belgium), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

68. **Mr. Flynn** (Ireland) said that, in the 18 months since the COVID-19 pandemic had swept the globe, the international community had witnessed growing inequality, including in access to vaccines, and relentless attacks on human rights in all regions. Multilateralism anchored in human rights was the only viable way to return the world to a more stable and sustainable path, and a road map for that purpose was set out in the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights.

69. All States should cooperate fully with and provide unrestricted access to OHCHR, the treaty bodies and the special procedure mandate holders, which played a critical role in protecting human rights for all. Civil society representatives belonged at the United Nations, participating, including in person, connecting States to the grass-roots level and holding States to account. His delegation was deeply concerned by continuing restrictions on civil society space in all regions; attacks had been witnessed on journalists and media workers, peaceful protestors, activists and human rights defenders.

70. Ireland urged all States to create a safe and enabling environment for civil society and to take tangible steps to prevent reprisals and intimidation. Reprisals against civil society actors that engaged with the United Nations must be categorically rejected.

71. States needed to move beyond silos and recognize that human rights belonged everywhere at the United

Nations. Since taking its seat at the Security Council, Ireland had sought to ensure that human rights were woven into efforts to maintain international peace and security. Human rights violations and abuses were both a driver and an integral part of conflict.

72. In Ethiopia, widespread sexual violence and the denial of humanitarian access were exacerbating the human rights impact of the conflict on the civilian population. The announcement of the expulsion of United Nations humanitarian and human rights officials from Ethiopia was of grave concern.

73. In States where conflicts raged, children were suffering disproportionately, deprived of their education because of violence and poverty, subjected to sexual violence, maimed and even killed. All States had a fundamental responsibility to protect children and the United Nations had a vital role to play in that regard.

74. Wherever impunity reigned, there was a risk of conflict and violence recurring. For that reason, Ireland supported the vital work of the International Criminal Court in ensuring accountability for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

75. Women and girls were bearing the brunt of the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the "shadow pandemic" of increased domestic violence. In many countries, the rights of women and girls were under sustained attack, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Ireland would continue to prioritize gender equality at home and abroad.

76. The fate of the women and girls of Afghanistan was of deep concern. Ireland stood with them in their call for full, meaningful and equal access to education, health care, freedom of movement within their own country and the right to participate fully in public life.

77. Over the past 12 months, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons in many States around the world had continued to be denied their human rights. The United Nations had an important role in promoting, protecting and fulfilling their rights.

78. Ireland remained steadfastly opposed to the death penalty and called on all countries that had not yet abolished the penalty to introduce a moratorium as a first step towards abolition.

79. Ireland strongly condemned all forms of racism and persecution on the basis of religion or belief. In the past 18 months, States had been forced to confront the realities of persistent racism in all societies, as well as an appalling upsurge in hate speech and religious intolerance. All countries should promote equality,

freedom of thought, conscience and religion and respect the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities.

80. **Mr. Bae Jongin** (Republic of Korea) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted daily life, had set back the achievement of economic prosperity and the Sustainable Development Goals and had had a disproportionate impact within and among nations, particularly with respect to vaccines. As Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Solidarity for Global Health Security, the Republic of Korea had been a strong advocate for universal and equitable access to safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines and had made a \$210 million contribution to COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, for the 2020–2022 period. His Government hoped that an increase in vaccine production would make them more affordable globally.

81. The pandemic had had a disproportionate and prolonged negative impact on vulnerable groups, including women, children and persons with disabilities. In times of crisis, there was a risk that issues such as women's empowerment, children's education and the livelihoods of minority groups would be ignored. The increasingly complex mandate of the Committee was therefore particularly important. Global solidarity and multilateral cooperation were the keys to overcoming the crisis and developing practical measures.

82. In 2021, hard-won gains in Afghanistan had been eroded. The painful journey towards democracy and the rule of law in Myanmar was also a matter of deep concern. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Special Envoy for Myanmar should visit Myanmar as soon as possible and all concerned parties should commence a constructive dialogue on a peaceful solution to the crisis. Strengthened efforts were needed to provide humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan and Myanmar, in cooperation with United Nations agencies and other partners.

83. As a country that strived to support and recover the honour and dignity of the "comfort women" of the Second World War, the Republic of Korea attached particular importance to combating conflict-related sexual violence, with a survivor-centred approach. In that context, it had launched its Action with Women and Peace Initiative in 2018.

84. His Government had been working with the international community to improve the human rights and living conditions of people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. His delegation noted with concern that the COVID-19 pandemic was eroding the livelihoods of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and encouraged that country's

Government to engage with the international community. Lastly, it hoped that dialogue would resume between the two countries on the subject of reuniting separated families.

85. **Mr. Mouctar** (Chad) said that, for the second year in a row, the Committee's session was opening against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. That scourge had continued to hamper the ability of States to provide their people with basic services, had had an impact on trade, had resulted in the losses of millions of jobs and had diminished the well-being of families. It had severely affected human rights, notably those of women and children: violence against women had increased and progress made with respect to girls' education had been reversed. Chad called for the universal distribution of vaccines in order to eradicate the pandemic.

86. Chad attached great importance to gender equality, women's empowerment and the fight against discrimination against women and girls. The Government had put in place a solid legal framework that not only guaranteed gender equality but also equality before the law irrespective of origin, race or religion. A new Criminal Code, adopted in 2017, protected the rights of girls by increasing the minimum age of marriage to 18 and criminalizing female genital mutilation. Chad had made efforts to ensure the participation of women in decision-making and political life, including enacting a law that established parity in elective bodies by instituting a progressive 30 per cent quota for women.

87. Despite those advances, considerable challenges remained. The pandemic had adversely affected the implementation of many socioeconomic development programmes, which had disproportionately affected women and girls. Security measures had been undertaken by the Government to combat terrorism in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions within the framework of a political transition following the death of the former President. As that period had been accompanied by increased vulnerability, Chad required additional resources to meet the enormous challenges.

88. Chad had taken steps to eliminate discrimination, racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. With Costa Rica, it had co-facilitated intergovernmental consultations that had led to the adoption in August 2021 of General Assembly resolution [75/314](#) on the establishment of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent. The creation of that Forum had been a step forward, but additional efforts were needed to fully secure equal rights and justice.

89. Chad had made great advances in the promotion and protection of human rights since the establishment

of democracy in the country. His Government reiterated its commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and to ensuring non-interference in the internal affairs of States, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

90. **Mr. Jaiteh** (Gambia) said that solidarity was required in order to face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and enhance sustainability while responding to the needs of the planet and its people. The Gambia called on the international community, especially the privileged and powerful, to commit to fair vaccine-sharing with a view to eradicating the pandemic everywhere.

91. The dreadful impact of conflicts and insecurity must not be forgotten, particularly in Africa. The challenge of addressing the root causes of conflict and climate change required global solidarity and United Nations leadership. The most important lesson that had been learned during the pandemic was that, without order and institutions fit for purpose, no one was safe. That lesson should engender a critical response that would better prepare the world for the next pandemic and help avert humanitarian catastrophes. The critical reforms under way within the United Nations system were welcome and would help to mitigate the impacts of conflicts and pandemics in developing countries.

92. Women constituted the fabric of family and community life. In the Gambia, women were leaders in all spheres of life and the Government had taken due note of their contributions as partners in development, adopting an inclusive approach in its nation-building agenda to amplify the role of women. In that endeavour, women had been strategically placed in positions in parliament and the judiciary, where they could have an impact on policy, on the rule of law and on legal decision-making.

93. The plight of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar remained dire. The Gambia would continue to pursue the case at the International Court of Justice until the victims of the atrocities received justice. The international community should not relent in its quest for accountability for the dire circumstances of the Rohingya. The Security Council was encouraged to begin to treat the issue as a threat to international peace and security. One important step that the Council could take would be to approve periodic reporting in line with the January 2020 ruling of the Court on the request for provisional measures, with a view to addressing the plight of the Rohingya people.

94. The Gambia underscored the importance of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which remained a guide when it came to universal respect for

human rights and fundamental freedoms, human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination.

95. **Ms. El Guera** (Mauritania) said that her country had made strides in implementing programmes aimed at combating injustice and marginalization, ensuring access to basic services, and supporting health and education systems. Mauritania had also worked to enhance national unity and social cohesion and promote the rule of law and good governance. To that end, the recently created Tazour agency had worked to promote social equality and to ensure the access of all Mauritians to electricity, clean drinking water, health care and education. At the beginning of 2021, Mauritania had enacted a new law to protect freedom of assembly by instituting a permit system for the creation of associations, as opposed to a licensing system.

96. The Government had recently taken steps to combat trafficking in persons by adopting a law to penalize the phenomenon and protect victims. In June 2021, the Government, in cooperation with OHCHR, had organized a round table on the application of Act No. 031/2015, which criminalized slavery. The purpose of that round table had been to identify progress made, to diagnose the most significant obstacles to the full implementation of the Act and to draft additional recommendations.

97. In line with its international commitments, the Government of Mauritania had made efforts to incorporate a gender perspective in all national policies and programmes. It had established a national strategy for the advancement of women, which was aimed at lifting certain social and economic constraints and enabling women to contribute effectively to the country's development. A national observatory of women's and girls' rights had also been established in the country in 2020.

98. A new law enacted to address violence against women and girls criminalized rape and protected women and girls from all forms of physical, verbal, sexual and psychological abuse. Efforts would be intensified to ensure women's access to reproductive health care and to raise the profile of women in the spheres of business, contracting and property ownership. The Government planned to set policies aimed at increasing school enrolment in rural areas among girls and children with disabilities. It also planned to begin the evaluation of a national action plan to eliminate child labour.

99. In 2021, the President of Mauritania had overseen the launch of comprehensive health insurance for 100,000 families, more than 15 per cent of the country's citizens. The Government had also recently taken bold steps to realize economic and social rights, especially

for vulnerable groups. The protection and promotion of human rights was a critical issue for the Government, whose approach was to ensure that all Mauritians enjoyed all basic individual and collective rights.

100. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that, after the February 2021 coup that had overthrown the elected civilian Government, the military had responded to peaceful mass protests throughout the country with brutality and had committed serious human rights violations, including murder, arbitrary detention, beatings, torture and enforced disappearances. The military State Administration Council had enacted laws and policies to suppress freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and had jettisoned the rule of law, in a systemic attack on democracy. During the previous eight months, the military had committed numerous abuses that had amounted to crimes against humanity, including the killing of more than 1,100 civilians, including women and children. On 16 April 2021, with a popular mandate granted by the general election of 2020 and following anti-coup protests and a civil disobedience movement, the National Unity Government had been formed.

101. In June 2021, the National Unity Government had issued a policy position on the situation of the Rohingya people, which had represented an important step towards resolving that issue. It acknowledged the rights of the Rohingya and the atrocious crimes committed against them by the military. The National Unity Government, actively seeking accountability and justice for serious past and ongoing crimes committed by the military against the Rohingya people and others, had initiated the process of granting the International Criminal Court jurisdiction over such crimes committed since 2002. It was expected that, with the end of military rule and a firm commitment from the National Unity Government, the Rohingya would swiftly return to their homes and their rights would be restored and respected.

102. Attacks on civilians, hospitals and schools and on humanitarian and medical workers in Myanmar had increased and the brutal crackdown and inhumane acts of the military meant that the people of Myanmar were living in fear. The Acting President of the National Unity Government had therefore declared a people's defensive revolution against the military in September 2021. As a result of the military's actions and the COVID-19 situation, the people of Myanmar faced acute challenges to their lives, health and well-being and required humanitarian assistance. His delegation called on the international community to provide such assistance through all possible means.

103. The people of Myanmar and the National Unity Government also needed international support for their

collective struggle to end the military dictatorship and emerge as an inclusive, democratic and peaceful country. Myanmar would welcome assistance from any regional or international organization towards that just cause. Member States should stand with the democratic aspirations of the people of Myanmar by extending unwavering support to the efforts of the National Unity Government to re-establish a democratic federal union.

104. **Mr. Pary Rodríguez** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the failure to ratify human rights treaties not only weakened the international legal order, but also meant that States were treated differently based on their divergent legal obligations. For that reason, his delegation called for a common international order and the universal ratification of multilaterally negotiated human rights treaties.

105. Emphasizing the importance of politically stable and popularly elected Governments, he said that it was only through popular legitimacy that public policies could advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Bolivian people had demonstrated the importance of the principle of self-determination and democracy. They had exercised their right to chart their own political course, reversing a coup d'état that had resulted in violations of human rights and massacres.

106. In various multilateral forums it had been noted that the COVID-19 pandemic must be solved at the global level. Vaccines should therefore be universally available and vaccine patent waivers should be permitted. Indigenous people were among the populations that had borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic and their access to science-based information on vaccines and to the vaccines themselves had been poor. Joint efforts were thus needed to prioritize those who were least served by health systems.

107. His delegation also wished to stress the importance of multilingualism as a core value of the United Nations. In line with the commencement of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages in 2022, the recovery and revitalization of indigenous languages honoured the world's rich cultural diversity and promoted tolerance within societies. The potential for self-expression in one's own language was fundamental to personal identity and recognition within one's community. States should take measures at the international and national levels to ensure that the International Decade had full United Nations support.

108. A more just and inclusive world was impossible when education was reserved for the few. As a key tool for eliminating poverty and ensuring a vibrant and inclusive society, primary education, particularly for

girls, should be free. Children with disabilities should have the right to grow up within a family and therefore efforts should be made to support families so that girls and boys with disabilities were not compelled to live in institutions indefinitely. His delegation called for the universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the withdrawal of reservations on that instrument.

109. **Mr. Salah** (Libya) said that ending the COVID-19 pandemic would require just, easy and affordable access to vaccines and overcoming its social and economic repercussions would require regional and international solidarity.

110. His delegation stressed the importance of the role of the family as the fundamental unit of society. Strengthening the family was critical for development and the prosperity of all, particularly children, and preserving the dignity of the family was a fundamental building block of sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goal target of eliminating all forms of violence against children must be reached by 2030. No society could achieve sustainable development without empowering each of its constituent groups, especially women, to participate in all development programmes and policies.

111. Illegal migration was a terrible humanitarian crisis. Many people, including women and children, were dying of thirst in the Sahara in their attempts to reach the southern border of Libya, and others had fallen victim to human trafficking. The survivors risked drowning when trying to cross to European shores. Despite the efforts of the national authorities to curb such migration and alleviate the suffering of migrants, capacities were limited. Growing numbers of illegal migrants were exacerbating the country's complicated economic and social problems. Libya called on the international community to focus on the problem's root causes by fostering genuine development in the countries of origin with assistance from the destination countries. The organizations and gangs involved in trafficking migrants must also be addressed in the origin, transit and destination countries. His delegation hoped that neighbouring countries would secure their borders to limit the activities of such gangs and called on the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Office of Counter-Terrorism to track the financial flows associated with illegal migration.

112. Libya had worked to integrate a human rights perspective in its national action plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It called on States to track and retrieve

illegally exported Libyan funds so that they could be redirected to the country's development and reconstruction.

113. Lastly, Libya stressed the need for respect for the human rights of the Palestinian people and the need to end all violations against them, which were taking place in full view of the international community. Libya reiterated its firm position of support for the Palestinian question and the right of the Palestinians to self-determination.

114. **Ms. Bouchikhi** (Morocco) said that her country's human rights approach was rooted in its Constitution, which prohibited discrimination on national territory. The Moroccan education curriculum, which had been reformed pursuant to the National Charter for Education and Training, exemplified diversity and cultural openness in keeping with country's long tradition of tolerance and coexistence.

115. The Constitution of Morocco also provided for free expression. In keeping with the role played by Morocco as a bastion of tolerance, the country had been the main sponsor of General Assembly resolution [75/309](#) on promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech, which proclaimed the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, to be observed annually on 18 June. Morocco supported the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities, which bore witness to the country's consistent position when it came to protecting the rights of vulnerable people. Her Government had developed a comprehensive child protection and youth strategy for the 2015–2030 period and had instituted policies to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and to address asylum and immigration matters.

116. Gender equality and civil, economic, political, social, cultural and environmental rights were enshrined in the Constitution of Morocco. Since 2006, women had been represented in religious chambers and had participated in Ulama councils and peacekeeping missions. The country had enacted a law to combat violence against women that had expanded the definition of violence to include acts of a sexual, psychological or economic nature taking place either within the family or in public spaces. Morocco had also established a national observatory for violence against women.

117. Morocco had been among the first countries to take strict measures to counter COVID-19. Its multidimensional approach had focused on health, economic and social measures, including the creation of a special fund for pandemic management that distributed

material and financial assistance to vulnerable households, waged workers, the unemployed, informal sector workers, refugees and businesses. The King of Morocco had announced the universal expansion of access to social protection measures, as well as a project to develop COVID-19 vaccines for the benefit of Morocco and all African countries.

118. Morocco had adopted a multidimensional and proactive approach to the interconnected phenomena of organized transnational crime and terrorism, which involved the enhancement of criminal justice measures, the amendment of penal and legal provisions and the adoption of a law governing clandestine immigration.

119. **Mr. Kimura** (Japan) said that the international community must unite to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic in order to leave no one behind. Japan had supported many other countries in building resilient health and medical systems, with an emphasis on the human rights dimension. Japan was concerned about disruptions to democratic progress in many parts of the world and about serious ongoing human rights and humanitarian situations.

120. The crisis in Afghanistan was of particular concern. Japan urged all concerned parties to ensure the safe passage of those wishing to leave the country; to protect the lives and property of all Afghans; to restore social order; to safeguard fundamental human rights, especially those of women and girls; and to assist in the creation of political processes that included diverse ethnic and religious groups. Japan would continue to closely monitor the actions of the Taliban.

121. The post-coup situation in Myanmar was also of grave concern. Japan had consistently called upon the Myanmar military to immediately halt the use of violence, to release detainees and to immediately restore the democratic political system. Japan had also conveyed to the Myanmar military its concerns over the invalidation of the election results announced in 2020.

122. The issue of abductions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was a matter of serious concern not only for the international community but particularly for Japan, whose national sovereignty and citizens were affected. That matter must be resolved immediately.

123. A culture of rule of law was increasingly important for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the context of violent conflicts. Japan was determined to lead in the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development and to advance international collaboration on the promotion of the rule of law. While it was important to address crimes relating to drugs, corruption and human trafficking, the potential of cybercrime to transcend borders and undermine the livelihoods of people globally deserved special attention.

124. Past progress made in securing gender equality and women's empowerment must not be reversed. Japan would continue to work with the international community, including through the women and peace and security agenda, to ensure that women were able to participate fully and meaningfully in decision-making. Japan had also taken steps to eradicate violence against children at home and abroad, including through the provision of \$1.4 million to the Fund to End Violence against Children and through the development of a national action plan to end violence against children. In 2019, Japan had adopted legislation related to the rights of the Ainu people and would continue to strive towards a society in which no individual suffered from racial, ethnic or other discrimination.

125. Japan would promote responsible business conduct through the implementation of its national action plan on business and human rights, adopted in October 2020. At the current session, Japan and Brazil would present to the Committee a resolution on volunteerism to mark the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers and the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of United Nations Volunteers.

126. **Mr. Espinosa Cañizares** (Ecuador) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the vulnerability of people living in poverty and those with health problems. In Ecuador, the pandemic had resulted in a health, economic and social emergencies. In response, the Government had taken steps to responsibly manage economic resources, launching a technical and humanitarian effort to address the crisis. As a result, less than four months after the inauguration of the new Government, more than 20 million vaccines had been distributed in the country and currently almost 60 per cent of the population was fully vaccinated. While that achievement belonged principally to the Ecuadorian people, it was also a testament to international cooperation.

127. The country's Opportunity Creation Plan for the 2021–2025 period envisioned a prosperous country with a full liberal democracy, the rule of law and effective institutions. In its first days, the Government had introduced a bill on free expression in the National Assembly. Ecuador was also discussing the introduction of a new law to foster job creation through tax, labour

and investment measures which should increase productivity and form part of the country's response to the dire economic situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

128. Ecuador was providing stimulus to the private sector without neglecting social investment. To that end, the country would launch new programmes to reduce poverty and eliminate child malnutrition, a problem that regrettably persisted in the most vulnerable communities. Ecuador was committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and promoting human rights and had ratified the major related international instruments. More than ever, respect for human rights was necessary for equitable development and maintenance of peace.

129. **Mr. Annaberdiyev** (Turkmenistan) said that national legislation in Turkmenistan provided legal mechanisms to ensure the equal participation of men and women in power structures, to guarantee equal economic and entrepreneurial opportunities for women and to foster the equal exercise of rights and responsibilities within the family. Of the 125 members of the parliament of Turkmenistan, 32, or 25.6 per cent, were women, a figure that was on par with levels in developed countries. The Speaker of parliament and the Commissioner for Human Rights in Turkmenistan were both women.

130. Turkmenistan welcomed the appointment by the Secretary-General of Sima Sami Bahous as Executive Director of UN-Women. The Government's partnership with UN-Women had been fruitful for the promotion of the rights of women and girls in Turkmenistan and had facilitated the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

131. The COVID-19 pandemic was the greatest test the world had faced in generations. Many people and communities continued to suffer deeply, not only from the disease itself but also from the economic and social impacts of the pandemic, which made the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals even more difficult. Universal access to safe and effective vaccines was the only way to end the crisis, support economic recovery and realize the Goals. From the very beginning of the pandemic, Turkmenistan had actively taken measures to counter the threat, developing a unified national strategy to combat COVID-19 that included legal, financial, economic, medical and quarantine measures.

132. Turkmenistan attached great importance to fulfilling its obligations to promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. All human rights, in particular the right to development, were universal, indivisible,

interdependent and interrelated. Moreover, human rights issues must be addressed in a constructive, non-confrontational and non-politicized manner in accordance with the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity and while avoiding the practice of "naming and shaming". Respect must be shown for the principles of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. When it came to country-specific situations, the Committee should not be used as a forum for political discussion; rather, States should cooperate and engage in genuine dialogue with the countries concerned.

133. **Mr. Hassan** (Somalia) said that his country was gravely concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic was a threat not only to fragile health systems, but also to socioeconomic structures. The far-reaching effects of the pandemic continued to hinder access to basic social services and, in some instances, to disrupt his country's State-building efforts, including initiatives to strengthen security and counter the threat from Al-Shabaab terrorists.

134. Somalia was currently making efforts to restore the social contract through trust-building, inclusion, protection and participation. Plans and procedures were currently in place for the holding of fair and credible elections in 2021, in which nearly one third of all parliamentary seats would be reserved for women. Somalia was committed to rebuilding the foundations of a more stable, safe and just society that ensured civil and political rights for all.

135. Somalia believed that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action would remain a guide when it came to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination. The Government supported laws prohibiting racial discrimination and believed that States should support remedies for violations related to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all related intolerance, especially in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

136. Somalia commended the progress made towards "A World Fit for Children", a plan of action that sought to protect children's rights and fundamental freedoms. Children had suffered the brunt of the impact of the pandemic owing to school closures and the suspension of other social and economic activities. Somalia was pleased to note that significant progress had been made globally in reducing child mortality over the previous several decades.

137. Youth were at the centre of all peacebuilding and development initiatives. Their leadership role in

preventing and resolving conflict, violence and extremism was indispensable for sustainable peace. Somalia was committed to focusing on enhancing their socioeconomic and political status and providing youth-friendly social services.

138. It should be noted that Africa was host to the largest population of the world's refugees and displaced persons. Somalia was concerned that several of its national programmes on refugees, returnees and displaced persons remained significantly underfunded, leaving refugees and internally displaced persons and host communities with few resources.

139. **Ms. Bakytbekkyzy** (Kazakhstan) said that upholding human rights had been a priority for her country since its inception. It had ratified all the major human rights instruments and had enacted national legislation and formulated policies and services in keeping with global human rights norms. In January 2021, Kazakhstan had ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

140. In June 2021, the Government had approved a comprehensive human rights protection plan that had outlined a long-term institutional framework. In addition, the Government had submitted its candidacy to the Human Rights Council for the 2022–24 period with the intention of contributing significantly to the Council's work. Kazakhstan was implementing a package of political reforms aimed at expanding political and social participation. The recently established National Council of Public Trust was working to facilitate pluralistic public dialogue, constructive engagement and social responsibility in the country.

141. Although it had been founded only 30 years previously, Kazakhstan was a mature and accomplished State. The top-down nation-building strategy that it had followed in its early years had been replaced by a more bottom-up, democracy-nurturing approach that fostered citizen engagement. An example of that new approach was the transition to the direct election of mayors in rural areas.

142. Gender equality was an important priority for the Government, which had gradually introduced progressive, women-oriented policies and reforms aimed at improving quality of life and equality of opportunity. Kazakhstan had reduced its gender inequality index by 60 per cent and had introduced a 30 per cent quota for women and youth in the parliament and in local bodies. Kazakhstan also intended to increase the proportion of women managers in State-

owned companies by 30 per cent. To better protect women and children, stiffer penalties for sexual crimes and domestic violence had been introduced. Kazakhstan had supported the regional programme of the Spotlight Initiative for Central Asia and Afghanistan, which was jointly led by the United Nations and the European Union, and had joined two action coalitions of the Generation Equality Forum. The country had developed a joint programme with the European Union and Uzbekistan to educate Afghan women at universities in Kazakhstan.

143. Kazakhstan looked forward to the emergence of an independent, sovereign Afghanistan living in peace internally and with its neighbours. Afghanistan must continue to adhere to its international obligations, ensure that its territory was free of terrorists, drugs and traffickers in persons and protect the rights of women and girls. Kazakhstan had provided a temporary relocation site in Almaty for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and other United Nations agencies, which could serve as a logistical platform for the delivery of humanitarian aid into Afghanistan.

144. Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had escalated, with nearly 220 million confirmed cases. That situation underscored global vulnerabilities and the need for multilateralism and international solidarity. It was imperative to "build back" to a more equitable, sustainable and humane world, starting with universal and fair access to vaccines. Kazakhstan had successfully produced its own vaccine, QazVac, and two others were in development. The country stood ready to share them, either bilaterally or under the COVAX Facility.

145. **Mr. Uzunovski** (North Macedonia) said that his country believed that safeguarding human rights and freedoms was the cornerstone of any democratic society and a prerequisite for stability, progress and development. Effective multilateralism and cooperation were needed for further progress against challenges such as discrimination and the unequal enjoyment of human rights and freedoms. Since its independence in 1991, North Macedonia had been a staunch supporter of multilateralism and had promoted dialogue and cooperation.

146. The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had had serious health and socioeconomic consequences in North Macedonia. The Government had adopted a number of measures aimed at mitigating those consequences, including financial assistance to affected individuals and economic sectors. The Government had also continued to pursue reforms in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Its reform agenda constituted a fundamental part of the processes required for integration into the European Union.

147. Preventing and combating organized crime and corruption was a priority for North Macedonia. A new law on preventing corruption and conflicts of interest had introduced stricter penalties for corruption offences. The Government remained committed to implementing its 2020–2024 corruption prevention national strategy in order to enhance accountability, transparency and responsibility.

148. North Macedonia placed special emphasis on the rights of women and girls. Measures were in place to expand gender-responsive budgeting, raise public awareness of gender-based violence and strengthen institutional capacities for the protection of victims. In partnership with the United Nations Population Fund, North Macedonia had made significant progress towards advancing sexual and reproductive health. A restrictive abortion law had been replaced with a new law that empowered women to exercise their reproductive rights. Gender equality had also been advanced through the development of a gender equality strategy for the 2021–2026 period and the enactment in January 2021 of a law addressing violence against women.

149. Public awareness had been raised of the need to respect diversity and special penalties were applied in cases where social media was used to spread intolerance. The establishment of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination had been a positive step forward in addressing existing problems.

150. The Government had adopted measures to protect journalists and media workers. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, North Macedonia had recognized that timely and fact-based information was important for protecting public health. Governmental institutions had developed programmes in close cooperation with the Association of Journalists of Macedonia, allowing media workers to carry out their work in freedom and safety.

151. Minority rights and the well-being of all ethnic communities was another high priority for the Government. With the full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the country had built a cohesive ethnic society based on principles of mutual tolerance and respect. North Macedonia, as a supporter of an effective and credible Human Rights Council, had submitted its candidacy for membership in the Council for the 2025–2027 term and was intent on contributing to the effective implementation of the Council's mission.

152. *Mr. Doualehyay (Djibouti) resumed the Chair.*

153. **Mr. Nunes** (Timor-Leste) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had disproportionately impacted the most vulnerable groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and those living under occupation. As a least developed country and small island developing State, the pandemic had put high pressure on the already weak health system in Timor-Leste. The equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines as a global public good was essential and should not be politicized. Cooperation based on genuine solidarity was therefore more important than ever to ensure that no one was left behind in the process to build back better.

154. Youth participation in development and decision-making processes was of paramount importance. In Timor-Leste, the growing youth population had the potential to place significant pressure on the education system and labour market. To mitigate that risk, his Government was working to promote education, health and vocational training; to establish community learning centres, including for students with disabilities; and had established a development fund to provide scholarships and training to young people.

155. Timor-Leste commended the efforts of countries to continue ensuring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In his country, remarkable progress had been made in terms of the empowerment of women. Despite the cases of gender-based violence in the country, his Government remained committed to removing obstacles in terms of access to justice, with a view to achieving gender equality. Lastly, his delegation condemned hate speech and malicious disinformation that promoted racial discrimination.

156. **Ms. Ighil** (Algeria) said that it was worrisome to see increasing levels of division during the discussions of the Committee, as consensus was diminishing and controversial issues were impeding the achievement of balanced outcomes. The ability to reverse those tendencies lay in the willingness to respect political, cultural and religious differences and to promote a spirit of solidarity. States must undertake genuine cooperation while upholding the principle of non-interference, in order to ensure more constructive engagement in the work of the Committee. Her delegation reaffirmed the universality, interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights, including the right to development. Moreover, discussions on human rights should be held in an impartial and balanced manner, without politicization or double standards, and with respect for the sovereignty of all States.

157. Algeria had recently adopted a plan of action to scale up its political and economic reforms, addressing five key areas: consolidation of the rule of law; the modernization of justice and public administration; combating corruption; the establishment of a free and responsible civil society; and the protection of fundamental freedoms, particularly the freedom of assembly and of the press. Those measures were interlinked with the Algerian development system, which was based on national solidarity and access to social justice.

158. Algeria had worked to ensure a high level of human development in the fields of education and health. That included the maintenance of free access to education for all children and the inclusion of information and communications technology in educational programmes, as well as the production of the first Algerian-made COVID-19 vaccine, accelerating the national roll-out of vaccines. Her Government also aimed to distribute those vaccines to other African countries.

159. The growing number of people in need of humanitarian assistance was a matter of concern. In response, the international community must increase efforts to protect forcibly displaced persons and assist their host countries in line with the principles of international solidarity and burden-sharing. Algeria supported the Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps, who were waiting for the United Nations to fulfil its responsibilities to allow them to hold a referendum on self-determination, thereby reaching a just and lasting solution that would put an end to the conflict. Her Government was working closely with the United Nations system and civil society to improve living conditions for the Sahrawi refugee in terms of access to electricity, water, education and health, including through the provision of COVID-19 vaccines. The international community must provide greater support to the Sahrawi refugees, who relied heavily on international humanitarian aid.

160. The right to self-determination was crucial in order to allow the enjoyment of other human rights and to ensure peace and stability. Algeria reiterated its unwavering support for the full realization of the right to self-determination for the peoples of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and expressed its deep concern for the lack of prospects for a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question.

161. **Ms. Chan Valverde** (Costa Rica) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had brought to light structures of poverty, inequality, discrimination and violence that had long existed within societies and which knew no

borders. Recovery must focus on human dignity, as was the case with any crisis. Improved standards of human rights could only be achieved through solidarity and cooperation, by way of multilateralism.

162. Costa Rica was committed to ensuring the full realization of human rights through concrete action, including through the prioritization of gender equality. In that regard, the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan must be safeguarded as a matter of urgency. In addition, her country was contributing to initiatives for the recognition of the legacy, culture and contribution of people of African descent, including close collaboration with the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent, to enhance its ability to eradicate systemic racism, which remained one of the long-standing debts of the international community.

163. Costa Rica was contributing to the formulation of concrete recommendations to make the United Nations a truly inclusive forum, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, and supported efforts to ensure an open civic space. Her country would continue to ceaselessly advocate for more rights and for a more inclusive and solidarity-based international system.

164. **Ms. Gelb** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that while the solidarity and commitment of the international community in relation to vaccine equity was encouraging, more concrete action was needed to make it a reality. Moreover, even when vaccines became available in certain countries, the fact that migrants were not included in certain national immunization roll-out plans was a cause for concern. A sense of safety and trust in health services must be fostered among migrants, through local actors working to enhance people-centred approaches adapted to specific contexts. Commitments to vaccine equity must be fulfilled by focusing on those most at risk of being left behind.

165. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of the Committee to provide a just, inclusive, peaceful and green environment that ensured the rights and protection of all children, as well as efforts by Member States to scale up child protection measures as part of their pandemic response. As the impacts of climate change intensified, child protection needs would continue to multiply. When disasters were forecast, taking deliberate, early and local action through coordinated approaches was crucial in order to meet the needs of children. By acting in advance, it was possible to find ways of utilizing shared resources to ensure that every child was safe. There were also opportunities to mainstream child protection into anticipatory humanitarian action in order to reduce the risk of

violence against children. Her delegation stood ready to support Governments in ensuring that children had access to protection services in the context of disasters and other emergencies.

166. **Ms. Courtois** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross) said that it was essential to ensure that the plight of internally displaced persons remained a priority on the global agenda. The combination of armed conflict, displacement and climate risks posed significant challenges to meeting the needs of internally displaced persons. Better understanding was needed of how climate shocks exacerbated the vulnerability of individuals in general and those displaced by conflict in particular. Analysis, programming and funding could help to cultivate knowledge of how to respond to their needs through concrete action. Efforts to adapt to climate change were currently limited in fragile and conflict-affected countries; measures to support adaptation could help to limit displacement, notably that which was caused by drought, poor crop yields or flooding.

167. The COVID-19 pandemic had compounded the challenges faced by internally displaced persons, many of whom were in precarious circumstances and depended on casual labour or external support. Consequently, they were disproportionately affected by the economic repercussions of lockdown measures. Pandemic response actions must be inclusive, protect the rights of internally displaced persons to life and health and provide non-discriminatory access to basic health care.

168. In order to reduce the scale of internal displacement in situations of armed conflict, States must ensure respect for international humanitarian law. Such respect could help to limit the degradation of urban services, which was key to avoiding further deterioration of living conditions and new displacement. Regional legal frameworks such as the Kampala Convention played a key role in preventing violations of international humanitarian law and should be further implemented at the national level.

169. Undertaking the intermediate steps of interim solutions to help people normalize their situations or regain autonomy was important, particularly when durable solutions were out of reach. The search for a sustainable remedy was often too focused on reversing displacement itself, rather than on respecting and restoring rights and addressing losses. In order to develop effective interim solutions, emergency support and resilience-building must be approached simultaneously at the start of the displacement, in order to better define short- and long-term interventions.

170. Working together with displaced persons was important, particularly women and children, as well as with host communities in order to identify needs at the individual and community levels. Such support could allow individuals to regain financial autonomy and to access social protection programmes. Policies must also be aimed at alleviating pressure on host communities, to help reduce tensions between displaced persons and their hosts.

171. Lastly, cooperation was required with a broad range of actors, including humanitarian organizations, development actors, the private sector, local and national authorities, and civil society, all of whom could help to develop interim solutions.

172. **Mr. Beresford-Hill** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta), speaking in a pre-recorded video statement, said that his delegation was neutral, impartial and apolitical and, in the context of its global humanitarian mission, made no distinction between persons, religions or belief systems. The worldwide relief agency, Malteser International, formed a network to provide constant support for excluded members of society and for those who had been left behind.

173. The provision of support was necessary for those struggling amid armed conflicts and natural disasters. It took the form of medical assistance, care for refugees, combating human trafficking and distributing medicines and basic equipment for survival. His delegation put human life and dignity at the centre of its operations. Furthermore, the current COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with political instability in many countries, had exacerbated existing vulnerabilities to human trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery.

174. The issue of the use of new technologies must be addressed in the context of humanitarian action. Human trafficking was a universal scourge and more slaves currently existed than ever before in history, remaining invisible in many countries. Human traffickers abused technology, inter alia: to identify potential victims on social media, entrapping them in situations of exploitation thereafter; to deceptively advertise recruitment for work and migration opportunities; and to advertise and control victims of slave labour while hiding traffickers and exploiters.

175. **Mr. Cognac** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that situation of the current pandemic, including the loss of working hours, jobs and labour income, threatened to halt progress on social development. The sharp increase in poverty and inequality had kept millions of people trapped in vicious cycles of working poverty and informality, where social protection, minimum wages and labour rights were

inexistent. The sectors affected most were also those that employed the most at-risk groups, notably women and young people; those in low-skilled jobs; migrants; ethnic and racial minority groups; older persons; persons with disabilities; and those living with HIV/AIDS. Nonetheless, solutions to unemployment and working poverty did exist, in the form of initiatives such as the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection.

176. The crisis had adversely affected millions of seafarers, with pandemic-related restrictions preventing hundreds of thousands from disembarking or travelling home. Seafarers were also affected by issues of access to medical care in general, as well as to COVID-19 vaccines. Member States must also work to implement General Assembly resolution 75/17 and the ILO Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, in order to foster international cooperation and economic recovery and to avoid further disruptions to global supply chains.

177. During the current International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, it was tragic that 160 million children were in child labour, the first increase in years. Half of those children were in hazardous work that put their health, safety and sometimes even their lives at risk. Nine million additional children were at risk of being forced into child labour by the end of 2022 as a result of the pandemic. The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), which provided the legal framework to prevent violations against children, must be fully respected and supported by legislative action at the country level. The surge in domestic violence and harassment at work that had taken place during the pandemic could not be tolerated. In that regard, the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) should be ratified and implemented by all Governments.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

178. **Mr. Kassaye** (Ethiopia) said that Ethiopia was of the view that selectivity and politicization in the work of the Committee was unproductive and did not help to achieve the collective objective of promoting and protecting human rights and advancing international humanitarian law. The fact that the statement made earlier by the representative of Ireland failed to recognize the work that had been done, as discussed in the Committee by his delegation at length, was regrettable. In its intervention, his delegation had explained the reasons why measures had been taken in relation to United Nations personnel. Furthermore, his delegation wished to underscore that Ethiopia, as a founding member of the Organization, always

demonstrated its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations.

179. The United Nations agencies deployed in humanitarian areas had a long presence in Ethiopia and continued to provide humanitarian assistance to the people in need. United Nations personnel also had a responsibility to respect the core humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality, as well as the law of the country. In that regard, the Government of Ethiopia reiterated its firm commitment to continue working with the United Nations agencies and called for the immediate replacement of the United Nations personnel.

180. With regard to human rights, work was under way by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and OHCHR, the outcome of which would soon be made public. A criminal group continued to attack civilians, destroy schools and health facilities, kill cattle, destroy economic assets, commandeer more than 400 trucks and impede humanitarian access. It was both highly regrettable and unfortunate that some members of the international community seemed to downplay such behaviour. That had to change. His Government reaffirmed its commitment to fulfilling its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Moreover, his delegation urged Ireland not to politicize the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia and to respect the national sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of his country.

181. **Ms. Nour Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic), addressing comments made earlier by the delegation of France, said that her delegation would have thought that the Permanent Representative, by virtue of his position and his presumed knowledge of the rules of appropriate discourse, would have addressed delegations by their names and not used terms that were foreign to the Committee.

182. In a report on terrorism issued by the Security Council, reference had been made to the fact that 101 out of a total of 193 Member States had exported terrorists to Syria; one of those countries, France, had exported 1,600 terrorists to Syria. Those terrorists had of course arrived in Syria by a miracle, with no assistance, funding or weapons from anyone. Meanwhile, the Representative of France had levelled serious accusations against her country. In other words, while some poor and developing countries were being flooded with terrorists, extremists, mercenaries and cannibals, some countries used those terrorists against other countries, including Syria, then lectured them about the protection and promotion of human rights.

France was a State that had suppressed peaceful demonstrators and had ignored violations of their human rights. That was to say nothing of its colonial record, which was replete with human rights violations. The fact that France had dared to level accusations at others was a testament to its shamelessness.

183. **Mr. Kim Nam Hyok** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation rejected the accusation made by Japan against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As previously clarified on several occasions, the so-called abduction issue had been resolved fundamentally, completely and universally. Moreover, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea itself was the victim of the abduction issue. Historically, Japan had been the worst war criminal and kidnapping State on record. In the past century, Japan had committed crimes against humanity, including the forcible abduction and kidnapping of 8.4 million young and middle-aged Koreans, the genocide of 1 million innocent Koreans and the military sexual slavery of 200,000 Korean women and girls. However, Japan described itself as a victim of abduction and continued to refuse to recognize its past criminal acts and to pursue national discriminatory policies against Korean residents in Japan. His delegation once again urged Japan to stop the politically motivated acts against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to give priority to taking concrete steps to officially apologize, with due compensation, for its past crimes.

184. The description by the representative of South Korea of the living conditions in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was completely and absolutely wrong. In his country, the interests of the people were given the highest and absolute priority. In particular, the right to life was guaranteed even in the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic. His delegation welcomed dialogue and cooperation in the international field of human rights. South Korea continued to incite distrust and misunderstanding against fellow countrymen; he strongly demanded that South Korea cease in its shameful acts, which were highly regrettable.

185. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that Algeria had once again sought to spread falsehoods regarding the Moroccan Sahara, which was a matter of territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Morocco had irreversibly reclaimed its Sahara through the Madrid Accord, as recognized by the United Nations. Algeria did not have the political courage to speak about other issues within the Committee, instead fixating on the Moroccan Sahara under its false pretexts concerning self-determination. If Algeria truly supported self-determination it should grant it first to its own people,

notably the population in Kabylia, who had long been demanding that right.

186. The settlement plan and the referendum had become definitively obsolete, were no longer discussed in the Security Council and the United Nations Secretary-General himself had concluded their inapplicability, notably in paragraph 32 of his report on the situation (S/2000/131). The Security Council and the Secretary-General had agreed that the only way to resolve the question of the Moroccan Sahara was through a political, realistic, pragmatic and lasting solution based on compromise. That solution could only be conceived of within the framework of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Morocco based on the Moroccan autonomy initiative.

187. The mention of the natural resources in the Sahara by the representative of Algeria was shameful. Moreover, Morocco would never allow the ordeal suffered by those in the Tindouf camps to be imposed on the population of the Sahara. In addition, the international humanitarian aid intended for the populations forcibly confined in the Tindouf camps was being fraudulently and systematically diverted on a large scale, as confirmed by the European Anti-Fraud Office and other bodies. Algeria must therefore hold itself accountable to the international community. The diversion had led to the personal enrichment of the Polisario, to the detriment of the populations in the Tindouf camps. The statement by Algeria had once again demonstrated how that country was a main party to the regional and bilateral dispute on the Moroccan Sahara between the Kingdom of Morocco and Algeria.

188. **Ms. Sieng** (Cambodia) said that the allegations made by the United States in its statement to the Committee on 4 October 2021 regarding human rights issues in Cambodia (see A/C.3/76/SR.5, para. 62) were baseless, false, misleading and politicized in nature. Those allegations did not reflect the reality in Cambodia and were categorically rejected by her delegation.

189. Cambodia had continued to adhere to the principles of the liberal, multiparty democratic system as enshrined in its Constitution. In addition to the existing political parties, new parties had been formed to participate in the 2022 communal elections, clearly signifying that rights to politics had been encouraged and fully respected in the country. As a State party to eight of the nine core United Nations human rights conventions, Cambodia had always attached great importance to the promotion and protection of the human rights of its own people and firmly believed that human rights defenders, in all their forms and

professions, were key partners in the advancement of human rights.

190. Cambodia was home to nearly 6,000 registered civil society organizations whose instrumental roles in the improvement of good governance and rural development were well recognized. A number of dialogue mechanisms had also been established to build close cooperation and partnership between the Government and civil society organizations. In her country, vibrant media freedom was manifested through the presence of nearly 2,000 new and existing traditional and digital media outlets operating without censorship, many of which voiced criticism. The people of Cambodia also enjoyed full access to social media without any restrictions.

191. Lastly, history had demonstrated that the politicization of human rights as a pretext to achieve political benefits and to interfere in the domestic affairs of other Member States had resulted in violence and protracted conflicts. It must therefore be ended immediately.

192. **Mr. Ichiba** (Japan) said that the claims and figures mentioned by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regarding Japan were groundless and based on factual errors. On the issue of abductions, under the Stockholm Agreement of May 2014, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had promised to conduct comprehensive and thorough investigations on all Japanese nationals concerned, including abductees. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must implement the Agreement and return all abductees to Japan as quickly as possible. Family members of the abductees were now advanced in age, with some having already passed away. Therefore, there was no time to lose.

193. Referring to comfort women as sex slaves did not reflect reality; the use of such terms should therefore be avoided. Furthermore, Japan had strived to eliminate racial discrimination, and no policy or rule existed that allowed discrimination against Korean residents in Japan. On the contrary, Japan had been working to eliminate unfair discriminatory speech and behaviour against individuals originating from outside of Japan.

194. Japan regarded the facts of history in a spirit of humility, and had consistently respected democracy and human rights, having contributed to peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and within the international community since the end of the Second World War. Overcoming mutual mistrust and deepening cooperation between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was imperative in order to achieve peace in North-East Asia. Therefore, Japan called upon

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to work together towards a brighter future.

195. **Ms. Ighil** (Algeria) said that Morocco was repeatedly levelling false allegations against Algeria. The irresponsible attitude of Morocco was proof of its hostility towards her country and was an attempt to divert the attention of the Committee away from the illegal occupation of Western Sahara and the massive violations that Morocco perpetrated there. Contrary to the deplorable statements made against Algeria, the allegation that Morocco was colonizing the territories of Western Sahara was not false. Rather, it was a verified fact, internationally recognized and written in all relevant United Nations documents. Proof could be found in the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, which were an annual reminder that the conflict in Western Sahara was a matter of decolonization that was intrinsically linked to the application of the right to self-determination.

196. The verdict handed down on 29 September 2021 by the General Court of the European Union annulling two trade agreements between Morocco and the European Union confirmed that Western Sahara was indeed a Non-Self-Governing Territory and ended decades of illegal use of its resources. Through that verdict, international justice had spoken. The right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara was inalienable; Algeria would therefore continue to express its support for them within the Committee.

197. The argument held by the Kingdom of Morocco was a form of outrageous propaganda against Algeria, their accusations even going so far as to insult the noble work of the United Nations in the Tindouf refugee camps. The work of the United Nations agencies and humanitarian non-governmental organizations in Tindouf, and the financial support granted annually by the donor countries and the European Union as humanitarian assistance for the Sahrawi refugees in Algeria, irrefutably proved that the allegations of a diversion of humanitarian aid were pure fabrication by the Kingdom of Morocco. Her delegation also categorically rejected the subversive rhetoric of Morocco against Algerian unity in its contemptible comments on the right to self-determination in Algeria, which was a decolonization issue duly included on the agenda of the United Nations.

198. The Kingdom of Morocco should also exercise caution in its actions, specifically with regard to the situation in the Rif region. The Rif region had been an autonomous republic before it was seized by Morocco, which had made it one of the poorest and most marginalized regions in the country where the people

demanded their freedom and independence, in some cases facing illegal imprisonment. The worst allegations by Morocco against Algeria would never affect the unwavering support of her country for the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination. The international community must act in response and be guided by international justice.

199. **Mr. Kim** Nam Hyok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the so-called abduction issue that Japan had once again raised had in fact already been resolved. The comments by Japan regarding solidarity with the international community over that issue were intended to tarnish the image of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to use the abduction issue for its own political purposes.

200. Japan was legally and morally obliged to offer a sincere apology and compensation to all the victims of its past war crimes. In spite of any denial by Japan, history could not be changed. Unless Japan provided full compensation for its past crimes and national discriminatory acts against Korean residents in Japan, there could be no positive relations between the two countries.

201. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that it was clear that Algeria was very unsettled by the growing support for the Moroccan autonomy initiative among several of the delegations present who had opened their consulates in the Moroccan Sahara. If Algeria was truly against double standards then it should apply the right to self-determination to the case of the people of Kabylia, a population of over 8 million people with a history of over nine thousand years. The people of Kabylia must enjoy their right to self-determination and the recognition of their cultural and linguistic identity, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

202. Algeria was in absolutely no position to speak about the issue of human rights in the Moroccan Sahara given its own dark record on the subject. Morocco was being used by the Algerian delegation as a scapegoat for the problems faced in its own country, including the popular uprising; repression targeting peaceful Hirak movements; the hundreds of convictions of human rights defenders; the arrest of journalists; the legal action taken against dissident voices; restrictions on freedoms; the socioeconomic and health crises; and the anger of the people. Those realities were recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human

Rights, the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders as well as non-governmental organizations and the international press. Even the media in Algeria had been deprived of accreditation. For two years and eight months, the Algerian people had simply been asking for their legitimate demands to be heard.

203. **Mr. Ichiba** (Japan) said that the statement made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was based on factual errors and remained groundless, including on the issue of abductions. Furthermore, Japan had accepted the facts of history in a spirit of humility, having addressed the issues of the international community with sincerity for over 75 years since the end of the Second World War. Having served as a non-permanent member of the Security Council 11 times since joining the United Nations, Japan had actively contributed to international peace and security.

204. Overcoming mutual mistrust and deepening cooperation between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was imperative in order to achieve true peace in North-East Asia. Japan called upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to work together with it for a brighter future.

205. **Ms. Ighil** (Algeria) said that it was scandalous and deplorable that the Moroccan delegation continued to reiterate the same allegations, distorting the facts and attacking her country. Once again, the Committee had been forced to listen to the fabrications of the Moroccan delegation, which lamented the fate of those who its own country was colonizing and had forced into exile, and to listen to its illusory claims of supposed human rights violations in Algeria, as if an occupying Power and repressive regime such as Morocco were in a position to advise others. The Algerian delegation would never stoop to the level of Morocco.

206. The Moroccan delegation would not succeed in diverting attention away from the human drama that prevailed in the occupied territories. The human rights violations committed by Morocco against the Sahrawi people were deplorable. The arbitrary sentences handed down to individuals who had cooperated with United Nations mechanisms spoke volumes. Instead of instrumentalizing human rights, Morocco should focus on the situation of systematic human rights violations that prevailed in its own country and in Western Sahara. Her delegation joined the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in condemning the restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association in Western Sahara, and the harassment, arbitrary arrests,

forced disappearances, cruel treatment and torture of journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders in the occupied territories, all of which deserved the urgent attention of the international community.

207. Despite all of the abject calumnies put forward by Morocco with regard to Algeria, her delegation expressed its unwavering support for the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination. Algeria would remain loyal to the principles that had always guided its foreign policy and would promote the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.