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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 11th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 7 October 2022, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Blanco Conde ..... (Dominican Republic)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

#### **Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of children**

- (a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (A/77/41, A/77/140, A/77/143, A/77/221 and A/77/282)
- (b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children** (A/77/309–E/2023/5)

1. **Ms. Gamba de Potgieter** (Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report (A/77/143), said that the nearly 24,000 grave violations against children verified by the United Nations in armed conflict situations in 2021 included killing and maiming, recruitment and use, denial of humanitarian access and abduction. Data collected through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict continued to show a significant difference in how boys and girls were affected, while the results of a recent study by her Office on the gender dimensions of grave violations reflected distinct needs for protection and prevention responses. Her Office was developing new impact studies relating to children with disabilities, climate insecurity and child trafficking to continue to address gaps in data collection and analysis. Following the issuance of a guidance note relating to child abduction, her Office was preparing new guidance on the denial of humanitarian access. It continued its promotion of sharing lessons learned and best practices, with partnerships across the United Nations system and with regional and subregional organizations, academia and civil society remaining the backbone of her mandate.

2. New ideas for follow-up that emerged from a meeting held in April with partners across the United Nations and civil society to discuss ways forward for the children and armed conflict agenda included themes of prevention and reintegration. It was recognized that, in the first 25 years of the mandate, many robust tools and initiatives had been developed at various levels to protect children from grave violations in the situations monitored through its agenda. A proposal was made to compile them all into a comprehensive international framework at the General Assembly level in order to better protect children, the best solutions for which remained the prevention of violations in the first place and sustaining peace, including through the improved reintegration of children. Reintegration efforts continued, as did efforts to seek funding and to conduct dialogues with national stakeholders, including affected children themselves. Dialogues with parties to conflict

resulted in the release of thousands of children, the adoption of new legislation, commitments and accountability measures and the signature of new action plans between the United Nations and warring parties. Her Office also explored ways to strengthen regional prevention initiatives, integrate child protection in mediation processes and protect education from attack.

3. **Ms. Oppermann** (Luxembourg) said that her country condemned the unjustified and unprovoked aggression by Russia against Ukraine and was concerned about the fate of children in Ukraine. Since its creation, the number of conflicts examined by the Office of the Special Representative had risen five-fold. She asked how Member States could ensure that the growing number of incidents occurring in conflict situations continued to be documented effectively, both in New York and in the field. She wondered what the main challenges were in monitoring and collecting information from diverse population groups and how the Office gathered information on children who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons.

4. **Ms. Majeed** (Pakistan) said that children were all too often drawn into conflict and hostilities, as illustrated by the alarmingly high number of verified grave violations cited in the status report of the Secretary-General (A/76/871-S/2022/493). Such acts of brutality towards children, whatever the causes, must end, and perpetrators must be held to account. She asked what the Office of the Special Representative had done to address the use of so-called less-than-lethal weapons, such as pellet guns.

5. **Ms. Frazier** (Malta) said that her country had recently collaborated with the Office of the Special Representative on setting up a pilot virtual summer school on child protection in armed conflict. Malta would continue to prioritize the children and armed conflict agenda in all multilateral forums and agreed that data analysis and data management was important for the prevention of grave violations. The Special Representative should continue to lead United Nations advocacy for the protection of conflict-affected children in all country situations examined by her Office, including in Ukraine in the wake of the unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression by Russia.

6. **Ms. Stricker** (Switzerland) said that, because girls, boys and children who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons all experienced conflict differently, her country supported the recommendation to embed technical expertise on gender into country task forces. She enquired how Member States could support the proposed global

strategy aimed at bringing together existing initiatives on children and armed conflict.

7. **Ms. Mousa** (Saudi Arabia) said that, according to media reports, Houthi militias continued to brainwash children, recruit them into military camps and deprive them of their basic rights. She asked the Special Representative to share her assessment of the action plan that had been signed by the Houthi militias in April 2022 and whether she perceived them to be sincere in that regard.

8. **Ms. Matheï** (Belgium) said that the difference in the proportion of boys recruited during armed conflict versus girls affected by sexual violence was shocking. Her delegation supported the call to strengthen gender analysis in the monitoring and reporting mechanism and wondered whether the specific needs of girls should be assessed in the context of the psychosocial and educational reintegration of children affected by armed conflicts. With regard to concerns about the ongoing killing and maiming of children by explosive weapons and remnants of war, her delegation reiterated its call to all States to sign and implement international legal instruments, including those on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions.

9. **Mr. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that his country closely collaborated with the All Survivors project, a Liechtenstein-based non-governmental organization advocating the eradication of conflict-related sexual violence against men, boys and persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity. While conflict-related sexual violence disproportionately affected girls, sexual violence against boys, especially prevalent in situations of forced displacement, remained significantly underreported, owing to harmful social norms and gender stereotypes. What could Member States do to support the improvement of sex-disaggregated data collection, monitoring and reporting in the face of those challenges?

10. **Ms. Özgür** (Türkiye) said that crimes committed against children by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the People's Protection Units (YPG) and the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces continued to be a source of major concern in Syria. In nearly 2,000 attacks over two years, PKK-YPG and its affiliates had killed more than 400 Syrian civilians, including children. They continued to abduct children, provide forced military training in camps, impose arbitrary school curricula and arrest, dismiss or mistreat teachers who opposed them. Although her delegation supported United Nations efforts to document those crimes and those of other terrorist groups, there was a need to demonstrate a unified front against terrorism in all its forms and

manifestations. It was also important to clarify that the executive branch of the Syrian opposition was the country's interim Government.

11. **Ms. Ekmektzoglou** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that it was commendable that the Secretary-General would include the impact of the unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine on children in his next report, but regrettable that the issue had not been addressed by the Special Rapporteur, despite it being one of the country situations currently being examined by her Office. She asked what measures her Office had taken to ensure that no additional Ukrainian children would fall victim to the Russian war of aggression, when the monitoring and reporting mechanism would be set up in Ukraine and how it would collaborate with other mechanisms operating on the ground.

12. **Ms. Dale** (Norway) said that her delegation shared the concerns of the Special Representative about children being treated as adults, which often happened under the cover of counter-terrorism or national security responses. She wondered how to best ensure that children recruited or used by armed groups were treated primarily as victims of grave violations of international law and handed over to child protection personnel for reintegration into society rather than being imprisoned and revictimized.

13. **Ms. Hamilton** (United States of America) said that her country was deeply concerned about the number of violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed against children. She asked what services and tools existed to ensure that children exposed to violence and those who were survivors of violence received timely and trauma-informed support and assistance, including mental-health and psychological services. In the light of reports that nearly 1,000 children had been injured or killed in Ukraine since its renewed invasion by Russia, and that thousands more continued to be separated from their parents, her country continued to call on Russia to stop its war against Ukraine.

14. **Ms. Ponikvar** (Slovenia) said that the report of the Special Representative, together with the results of the study conducted, highlighted the severity of multiple violations against all children, with girls disproportionately affected by sexual violence in particular. With inequality and harmful social norms being determining factors in children's exposure and vulnerability to abuse by parties to conflict, she enquired about the best way to protect children during armed conflicts in places where such contexts prevailed.

15. **Mr. Drescher** (Germany) said that protecting children in armed conflict had been a long-standing priority for his country. As a consequence of the war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, shocking reports were emerging of Ukrainian children, including children with disabilities and orphans, being deported to parts of Ukraine currently occupied by Russian forces, or to the Russian Federation itself. Germany called upon the Russian Federation to stop that abhorrent and criminal practice immediately. He asked what the United Nations and its Member States could do to better protect the rights of children in both Ukraine and Afghanistan.

16. **Ms. Lortkipanidze** (Georgia) said that her country was deeply concerned by the lack of protection of children living in conflict zones, including in Ukraine, where children had endured unprecedented violence owing to the unjustified and unprovoked full-scale military aggression by Russia. The dire humanitarian and human rights situation in the Russian-occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, for example, was a major concern for Georgia, owing, inter alia, to severe restrictions on movement and prohibitions on educating children in their native language. She enquired as to what further steps States could take to ensure greater humanitarian access and protections.

17. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was grateful to the Special Representative for promoting dialogue with States on the protection of children, in particular, the discussions with Syria and Iraq on the repatriation of the children of foreign terrorists. It should be noted that most of the problems faced by Syria stemmed from the aggression, unlawful occupation and looting of its resources by the United States.

18. **Mr. Varem** (Estonia), speaking on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden), said that the report of the Special Representative provided an alarming reflection of the severity of violations committed against children affected by armed conflict. From Russia's brutal and unjustified war in Ukraine to the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon and bloodshed in Yemen, the ongoing killing and harming of children reflected the absence of accountability and justice for children. Echoing the Special Representative's appeal for a stronger gender perspective in monitoring and reporting mechanisms, he asked what immediate action countries could take to improve the protection of children affected by conflict.

19. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation considered the report of the Special

Representative to be unobjective and containing many mistakes. PKK and other militia groups were holding many children in Syria captive, despite the existence of an action plan with those groups since 2019, as mentioned in the report. She had ignored the situation of more than 500 children killed in an attack on a prison in north-eastern Syria in January and had not mentioned unilateral coercive measures, sanctions or the effect of those sanctions on children in his country.

20. **Ms. Skoczek** (Poland) said that her delegation wished to know how the Office of the Special Representative planned to address the evolving and highly disturbing situation in Ukraine; what measures and actions had been undertaken to date; and when the monitoring and reporting mechanism would be implemented in Ukraine. Calling for immediate additional reporting and monitoring on the situation in Ukraine in accordance with the mandate of the Special Representative, she asked what opportunities there were for the international community to assist in that task.

21. **Ms. Mudrenko** (Ukraine) said that her country remained determined to constructively engage and cooperate with the Special Representative and her Office to effectively stop and prevent violations against children affected by the war of aggression brought by Russia against Ukraine, which had caused the largest children's rights crisis in Europe since the Second World War.

22. **Ms. Freudenreich** (France) said that, in 2021, armed and intercommunal conflicts continued to have a negative impact on children's lives. She requested a detailed assessment of the situation of children in Ukraine. Recalling the importance of developing and adopting action plans for a world without child soldiers and without child victims of conflict, France called on all States to endorse the Paris Principles and Commitments.

23. **Ms. Salem** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict had been one of the deadliest conflicts for children, with attacks on schools and hospitals among the highest figures verified during the reporting period. She asked what Member States could do to further support the mandate of the Special Representative, and the tools available to her, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, where children continued to suffer from one of the most protracted protection crises.

24. **Mr. Al-Suwaidi** (Qatar) said that his country reaffirmed its continued support for the mandate of the Special Representative through a donation of \$1 million for the period 2022–2023 for the activities of the Office of the Special Representative in New York. Qatar also

supported that important mandate through the Analysis and Outreach Hub of the Office of the Special Representative, which had been opened in Doha in 2020. That support would strengthen institutional knowledge on the issue of protection of children, with an emphasis on their reintegration.

25. **Mr. Ríos Badillo** (Mexico) said that his delegation valued the Special Representative's focus on the matter of explosive weapons and remnants of war. He enquired as to what more could be done to prevent the killing and maiming of children caused by weapons and land mines. He asked her to elaborate on mental health issues affecting children and adolescents in armed conflict situations and requested that she address the topic in her next report.

26. **Ms. Stanciu** (Romania) said that grave developments mentioned by the Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine at the fifty-first session of the Human Rights Council included children in Ukraine being unlawfully confined, as well as killed and injured in indiscriminate attacks with explosive weapons. Romania had done its utmost to ensure the protection of all Ukrainian children fleeing from the unprovoked and unjustified war launched by Russia in their country. How could Member States most efficiently help and protect children fleeing from such conflicts, and what were some best practices and lessons learned for achieving results in such situations, unseen in Europe for decades?

27. **Mr. Sharma** (India) said that his country was concerned about the continued rise in the scale and severity of violations against children in armed conflicts. Close cooperation between Member States and the United Nations was critical, as was the participation of Governments in the collection and verification of information. His delegation sought information on the impact of food insecurity on children in armed conflict and on the policies of Member States with regard to ensuring child protection in their coronavirus disease (COVID-19) recovery plans.

28. **Mr. Lingad** (Philippines) said that COVID-19 had overstretched social services, negatively affecting prevention and reintegration programmes. He enquired about innovative practices used by the United Nations or Governments to deliver reintegration services for children during the pandemic.

29. **Mr. Kouakou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that gains made in combating grave violations against children were often hindered by persistent armed and intercommunal conflicts that sustained a vicious cycle of recruitment. A well-planned and successful social reintegration process, with the collaboration of all stakeholders, could

significantly help to break that vicious cycle and to offer a stable and safe environment to children removed from conflict zones.

30. **Ms. Zoghbi** (Lebanon) said that no child should bear the brunt of conflict. She enquired about the criteria for adding parties to the lists of those who committed grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict, provided in the annex to the annual report of the Secretary-General, especially given that the report contained mentions of perpetrators that were not listed.

31. **Ms. Ahmadova** (Azerbaijan) said that ensuring full compliance with international humanitarian law was key to the effective protection of children, who continued to be targeted by grave violations. As wrongful acts left unpunished often served as catalysts for new crimes, accountability was vital to peace and long-lasting reconciliation. United Nations resolutions on missing persons contained calls for attention to be paid to cases of children reported missing in connection with armed conflict. She wondered if such cases were considered among the difficulties encountered in the protection of children in armed conflict or in raising awareness about the plight of children affected.

32. **Ms. González** (Argentina) said that her delegation appreciated the gender perspective approach taken in the report of the Special Representative. She asked what measures were recommended for ensuring a gender perspective in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to guarantee a victim-centred approach to prevention and response and the full protection of children in all their diversity.

33. **Mr. Lamce** (Albania) said that his delegation wished to know what steps could be taken to integrate a stronger gender perspective and analysis in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. In relation to disturbing reports received about the situation of children as a result of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, he enquired as to how the efficiency of the mechanism in the country could be improved with regard to crimes against children.

34. **Ms. Andújar** (Dominican Republic) said that her delegation appreciated the views of the Special Representative on the prevention of grave violations against children and her administration's focus on gender. She asked her to elaborate further on some of the preventive measures she proposed. She wondered how promoting a stronger gender perspective could contribute to a better examination of the impact of invisible gender norms and biases on the protection of children and thus improve responses to grave violations.

35. **Ms. Font Vilagines** (Andorra) asked how the pandemic had affected the rehabilitation and reintegration processes for liberated children. She wondered how the right to education could be guaranteed for such children, so as to prevent them from falling back into the hands of armed groups.

36. **Ms. Gamba de Potgieter** (Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that Member States, civil society, United Nations system entities and regional organizations had sufficient conventions, initiatives, norms and policies to improve child protection. What was missing was a global framework or strategy to tie them together and determine what needed to be done at each level and how to operationalize existing policies and initiatives in order to improve delivery, including in the context of armed conflict. For that, a General Assembly decision was needed, requesting her Office to conduct a mapping study of actors, actions and necessary improvements, aligned with four pillars of operation: protection, prevention, reintegration and post-conflict peacebuilding.

37. What was needed to improve post-conflict and post-trauma reintegration assistance to boys, girls and those with different sexual identities was not just more data, but more resources and expertise. The Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers had been created, and numerous studies on converging topics launched, in order to better identify real needs. Work had also begun on boosting data on mental health needs for all age groups and among sex-disaggregated groups of children. The new office in Doha would soon be launching a joint project with the regional office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in Qatar on improving curricula relating to armed conflict and developing a teacher training manual aimed at reducing stress on children returning from conflict. Those tools could also be applied in Ukraine. Her Office had reached out to the Resident Coordinator and the representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as soon as a situation of concern had been declared there, to offer full support for the monitoring and reporting mechanism, which had been created on that day. Information was reported quarterly to her Office, which continued to engage with all actors, including warring parties, to better protect children. She was keeping an eye on situations leading to large numbers of children being injured during demonstrations and crowd control operations. Her Office was engaging with certain Member States to change their operational means and mechanisms for

crowd control and develop terms of reference for their use.

38. Highly vulnerable children, in particular those held in camps, must be treated as victims and reintegrated, regardless of past associations as minors with armed or terrorist groups. The joint statement submitted the previous day with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, was to be the mainstay of all actions taken by her Office in the coming year, namely, to clearly express and define the age of a child, in order to ensure that their special rights were upheld. A challenge to that was that many children in camps had no birth certificates and, therefore, no identities, making repatriation impossible. It was necessary to make it imperative for all Member States to provide birth certificates to every person born in their country. To improve monitoring and reporting, language for child protection must be embedded in all United Nations policies and decisions. To truly place children at the heart of Member State actions, resolutions and resources were needed to support, train and capacitate expert advisors as child protection officers and analysts for country tasks forces on monitoring and reporting in situations of concern.

39. **Ms. Maalla M'jid** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children), introducing her report ([A/77/221](#)), said that children's vulnerability to violence continued to be exacerbated by multiple and overlapping global crises. Strengthened collective efforts were needed urgently to translate good intentions into concrete and sustained action. With a view to continued advocacy, bridge-building and critical engagement with Member States and regional institutions, the Special Representative had conducted nine country visits in the past year, including one online, as well as several high-level dialogues. Nevertheless, although support from civil society and Governments was of the utmost importance, the work of her Office, including on the intersectionality of violence against children and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, was also informed by constant engagement with children, who shared their views and initiatives. Tools and guidance provided by her Office, combined with experience and practices in consulting children and preparing child-friendly documentation, had inspired similar processes by others. Her call to invest in cross-sectoral child- and gender-sensitive protection systems was gaining steam. Working closely with the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual

Violence in Conflict, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other key partners, her Office had addressed the lack of early identification and protection of children at risk owing to forcible displacement. As Chair of the United Nations task force on the global study on children deprived of liberty, she continued to share practices on child-sensitive justice and on ending child immigration detention.

40. The climate crisis was a threat multiplier for violence against children, who bore the least responsibility but were among the hardest hit by its impacts. Discussions with children had revealed a high level of climate anxiety and dissatisfaction with Governments, institutions and private sector responses. Despite various commitments and policies to tackle the climate crisis, the protection of children and of their rights remained unaddressed. There was also a need for greater investment in adaptation and resilience and for strengthened cooperation and multilateralism based on mutual partnerships and accountability. Climate justice and social justice were more important than ever. The recent recognition by the General Assembly of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a means for reducing environmental injustices, closing protection gaps and empowering people provided a sound road map for action. Despite the barriers they faced, children had taken the lead in fighting the drivers of climate change and calling for urgent climate action. A few days earlier, she had met with children from around the world, who had called for a healthy, safe environment, free from violence for and with all children. It was necessary to empower and involve children in discussions and decisions affecting the future and ensure them a central place in all efforts to end violence and resolve the climate crisis.

41. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that children around the world continued to be exposed to the numerous impacts of climate change on the realization of their rights. She enquired as to how the Office of the Special Representative would engage with Member States to ensure the implementation of the human right to live in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as newly recognized by the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. Her delegation welcomed the joint pledge to end child immigration detention submitted by the United Nations task force on the global study on children deprived of liberty at the International Migration Review Forum and wished to know how the task force would continue to consolidate its advocacy role in that regard. Her country looked forward to the Special Representative's upcoming visit.

42. **Ms. Oppermann** (Luxembourg) said that a paradigm change was needed to end violence against

children, which had devastating and lifelong financial and social consequences, both on its victims and on society. Children must participate in all decision-making that concerned them, including at United Nations events such as the Summit of the Future. She wondered what good practices had been identified to facilitate the children's participation in decision-making, both at the national level and within the United Nations.

43. **Mr. Elizondo Belden** (Mexico) said that, as a member of the Group of Friends of the Mandate of the Special Representative, his country would continue to facilitate the creation of spaces for the promotion and protection of children's rights. Harassment, including online harassment, was a form of violence that threatened children's well-being and caused physical and emotional harm, academic problems and aggression, which the use of technology only exacerbated. His delegation wished to know how information and communications technology companies could help to strengthen prevention capacities, while ensuring the participation of children and protecting their right to privacy.

44. **Ms. García Rico** (Spain) said that her country welcomed the Special Representative's focus on the consequences of climate change on children and adolescents around the world and on protecting them from digital violence. The eradication of violence against boys and girls was a priority for both the administration and society in Spain, which had adopted a comprehensive law in 2021 to protect children and adolescents against all types of violence.

45. **Ms. Baptista Grade Zacarias** (Portugal) said that her country welcomed the focus on the connection between climate emergency and violence against children in the report of the Special Representative. Given that exposure to violence caused long-term psychological damage, her delegation requested clarification on how best to integrate a child-sensitive approach in mental health policies and strategies.

46. **Ms. Zoghbi** (Lebanon) said that her country looked forward to the Special Representative's upcoming follow-up visit in November 2022, when her Government, together with UNICEF, would be convening a high-level political meeting to launch a call to action for children in Lebanon.

47. **Ms. Ekmektzoglou** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the European Union and its member States welcomed the focus on investing in child- and gender-sensitive protection and violence prevention in the report of the Special Representative and eagerly awaited the

upcoming study on the linkages between climate change and child protection. She enquired about the three most important measures that countries could take to protect children from exposure to vulnerability and violence in the context of climate change. She asked what Member States could do over the short term that would deliver the biggest change with regard to the disproportionate effect of climate change on women and girls, especially in rural areas.

48. **Ms. Frazier** (Malta) said that the climate crisis was an added threat to violence against children and echoed the need for education, climate literacy and awareness-raising, both in climate action and to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Although children had been asking for climate justice, many were being left behind, owing to social inequalities and discrimination. Member States must ensure that education systems were capable of responding to children affected by conflict and other crises. She wondered how the momentum of the Transforming Education Summit could be used to involve children in preparations for the Summit of the Future.

49. **Mr. Lingad** (Philippines) said that his country recognized the importance of the participation of children in ending violence against them, the risk of which had been aggravated by climate change. Recognizing both the needs of children and the role they could play in climate change, the Philippines had positioned children within its climate policy frameworks and made child participation a guiding principle of its Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act. He asked how the United Nations and Governments could build the capacity of children, including the poorest and most disadvantaged, to participate in climate policy and disaster risk reduction efforts.

50. **Ms. Gill** (Ireland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her country welcomed the Special Representative's active consultation of children and her advocacy of including children from diverse backgrounds in decision-making. To elevate the voices of children, Ireland had established a youth advisory panel, which had published a report for the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Ireland had also been the first country to publish a national strategy on the participation of children and young people in decision-making. Global barriers to children's participation remained, especially for girls, who were at increased risk of gender-based violence, child marriage and sexual exploitation during times of conflict. What key measures could States and international organizations take to include children in decision-making processes

regarding age and gender-responsive protection and violence prevention?

51. **Ms. Stanciu** (Romania) said that in the 33 years since its adoption by the General Assembly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child had become one of the most widely ratified human rights treaties in history. As one of the first countries to adhere to the Convention, Romania had made visible progress in the field, placing the best interest of the child at the core of its legislation. Romania appreciated the support and guidance of partners such as UNICEF and the advice and recommendations provided by the Special Representative pursuant to her visit in May. Romania had been the first country in the European Union with a medium- and long-term vision for protecting Ukrainian refugees and their rights and remained committed to supporting Ukrainian child refugees.

52. **Ms. Zamora Zumbado** (Costa Rica) said that approximately 60 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal targets were related to children and adolescents, reflecting their centrality to the 2030 Agenda. Action was needed to avoid losing a new generation to the devastating impacts, both immediate and lifelong, of the pandemic and other crises. Reiterating her country's invitation to the Special Representative to support its efforts in addressing the issue in the context of education reform driven by the Transforming Education Summit, she asked what States, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders needed to do to break the silos impeding full attention to children's rights and well-being and create a paradigm shift.

53. **Ms. Andújar** (Dominican Republic) said that the upcoming visit by the Special Representative would help to strengthen her Government's efforts to protect children against all forms of violence. She enquired about the Special Representative's priorities for accelerating progress towards ending all forms of violence against children in Latin American and the Caribbean. She also asked her to share positive experiences from other countries that had integrated child protection into their responses to climate change, in particular through public-private partnerships.

54. **Ms. Matheï** (Belgium) said that, just like the report of the Special Representative, the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its concluding observations on the recent periodic report of Belgium had also been translated – by children – into child-accessible language, thereby strengthening their own engagement. On the eve of the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a



focus on the impact of the climate crisis on the protection and well-being of children was relevant. Given that children needed to be part of the solution, but that barriers to their participation remained considerable, she wondered how to better involve children in the development and implementation of climate policies.

55. **Mr. Méndez Bocanegra** (Colombia) said that his country's judiciary had recently issued a judgement on the protection of the fundamental rights of an 8-year-old boy. The decision had included an explanation of his rights and how they could be realized, directed at the child and expressed in child-friendly language. He asked how that type of good practice could be applied to make it the norm and not the exception.

56. **Mr. Faiq** (Afghanistan) said that, given the changes and circumstances on the ground in Afghanistan, his delegation would like to know what measures had been taken by the Special Representative to protect children's rights there, in particular in the light of worrying reports about human rights violations against women.

57. **Mr. Cheng Liang** (Malaysia) said that his country had strong legal frameworks to combat violence against children and provide adequate social protection for them. He enquired about best practices deployed by Member States and country missions that had adopted a whole-of-government approach in creating greater understanding and coordination of the differing roles of the various government agencies in strengthening relevant prevention and response efforts.

58. **Ms. Ponikvar** (Slovenia) said that the report of the Special Representative contributed to a greater understanding of the linkages between the climate crisis and violence against children. Her delegation welcomed the call to learn lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis and to invest more in an inclusive, resilient and safe recovery for all children worldwide. Given that overlapping crises acted as threat multipliers for exposure to violence, policies must take into account the fact that the poorest children were hit the hardest by the climate crisis. She wondered how the newly established right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment could best help to protect children from violence.

59. **Ms. Heifetz** (United Kingdom) said that the impacts of climate change had been identified as a direct driver of child, early and forced marriage, as many families married off daughters as a consequence of food scarcity and poverty. Accelerated global action was urgently needed to end that harmful practice. The United Kingdom continued to fund the work of the Global

Programme to End Child Marriage launched by the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF and welcomed the call to meaningfully engage children and young people in the development of relevant policies and interventions. To ensure the long-term effect of those interventions, systemic problems such as gender inequality and harmful social norms must be addressed. What lessons could be learned to guarantee an international response to violence against children, while prioritizing comprehensive preventive efforts?

60. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that the argument that all national climate plans should be geared towards children, as the Special Representative had repeatedly stated, was startling. The situation of socially vulnerable groups should certainly be reflected in such plans but, given that environmental issues affected the whole of humanity, it was excessive to consider them solely from the perspective of children.

61. **Ms. Mamadou** (Niger) said that the Sahel was currently facing an unprecedented security situation. She wished to know whether the Special Representative had seen the refugee camps in the Tillabéri and Diffa regions of her country during her recent visit and, if so, what solutions were being taken to improve the situation of children living there.

62. **Ms. Demosthenous** (Cyprus) said that the scale and complexity of the online sexual exploitation and abuse of children caused enormous challenges worldwide. Her country had prioritized the issue owing to the dramatic increase in the problem. She asked what gaps in legislative and policy implementation should be identified to combat the causes of sexual offenses against children, both online and offline.

63. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the report of the Special Representative contained many original points, including that children were increasingly at the forefront of initiatives for positive and sustainable social change worldwide. He requested examples of child-sensitive climate laws and policies that Governments and others should adopt and implement.

64. **Ms. Mudrenko** (Ukraine) said that, according to Russian statements, more than half a million Ukrainian children had been deported to various regions of Russia, more than 2,000 of whom were orphans or deprived of parental care. To date, Ukrainian authorities had identified 7,894 children who had been thus deported. Only 59 had been returned to relatives in Ukraine; many others had been given up for adoption in Russia. Given the lack of access to the area mentioned by the Special Rapporteur, she asked how the United Nations and the international community could better respond to the

forced deportation of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation.

65. **Ms. Maalla M'jid** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children) said that child- and gender-sensitive protection needed to be embedded into all policies, not just climate-related policies. Investing in children meant adopting a systemic and life-cycle approach, involving families, caregivers and the entire population. As protecting children against violence cost only 8 per cent of gross domestic product, taking their specific needs into account not only protected human rights, it also made economic sense.

66. In many countries, the most vulnerable groups were the most invisible and, consequently, the most forgotten. That was owing not only to a lack of data, but to an absence of social registration, early detection and proactive prevention. Cross-sectoral violence prevention and protection measures included safe, inclusive and empowering education, including early childhood education and safe digital learning, as well as access to physical, mental and reproductive health, child- and gender-sensitive justice and social protections for all children and their caregivers. Such measures were the responsibility of numerous key ministries, at both the national level and the local level, and involved many professionals in many sectors building a chain of policies and services around the child. Many countries had a front-line workforce for one-stop service provision. Coordination was important, however, for clarifying responsibilities and accountabilities. In many countries, all social protections, including child protection, ran parallel to development plans. It was necessary to embed social protections into development, security and climate policy and to stop relying on donor-sustained initiatives, which were often donor-driven and not context-specific and which provided insufficient scale or impact. Self-reflection and coordination were needed, even within the United Nations system, to ensure that children were integrated into multiple mandates, as they could be victims of various forms of violence and present a variety of risks.

67. Exposure to crisis and violence had a very strong impact on mental health, as evidenced by the high incidence of suicide and self-mutilation in camps. Resolving humanitarian situations required more than just cash transfers; it also required care, protection and empowerment and the strengthening of local and national systems to ensure their sustainability. Child participation did not mean instrumentalizing children to become protestors and lead strikes. Children were already acting without adult involvement, by speaking

out and using social media. They had experiences and ideas and could take the lead in concrete action. As they were the parents of the next generation, it was essential that they were on board, peacefully and constructively, on situations that affected them.

68. **Mr. Wijesekera** (Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Programme Group), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children ([A/77/309-E/2023/5](#)), said that at its 2002 special session on children, the General Assembly had adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children" ([A/RES/S-27/2](#)). Despite progress, the world still was not fit for all children. The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, conflicts and other humanitarian crises had had a profound impact, especially on the most vulnerable children. Urgent action was needed to ensure that public spending and tax systems benefited communities and children directly, that the social protection measures introduced during the pandemic were preserved and strengthened, and that investments in education, universal social protection, primary health care and mental health care were increased. Lastly, it was imperative to address climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, which children correctly identified as the most pressing problems of the twenty-first century.

69. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage ([A/77/282](#)), he said that the report examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemic-related school closures had exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities in access to education, increasing the risk of child, early and forced marriage. In addition, lockdown measures had resulted in a surge in gender-based violence, and the strain on health-care systems had severely limited access to information and health-care services. Economically vulnerable families may have resorted to child, early or forced marriages as way to reduce their financial burden.

70. The report offered strategies for mitigating the impact of the pandemic on child, early and forced marriage. They included strengthening social protection and poverty alleviation measures, promoting access to education and learning opportunities, improving legal protection and support services, and enacting comprehensive legislation and policies. The report also underlined the urgent need for accurate and timely data.

71. **Ms. Ekmektzoglou** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the European Union had long worked in close partnership with UNICEF. The European Union valued

the guidance provided by UNICEF on advancing and protecting children's rights online and its efforts to prevent online sexual exploitation and abuse. She would appreciate information on challenges that UNICEF encountered in mainstreaming children's rights in the United Nations system and examples of good approaches to promoting the participation of children, including girls, as agents of change.

72. **Mr. Cheng Liang** (Malaysia), noting that his country had worked with UNICEF since 1954, said that it was currently collaborating with UNICEF on incorporating children's digital rights into the national policy and action plan on children. There was not enough data on children with disabilities to assess the effectiveness of existing interventions. He would appreciate information on promising practices for collecting such data, including any tools that UNICEF might be able to offer Member States.

73. **Ms. Mudrenko** (Ukraine) said that her country commended the efforts of UNICEF to save and protect the millions of Ukrainian children severely affected by the full-scale Russian aggression against her country. She urged it to work jointly with the international community to prevent further suffering and violence against them.

74. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his Government had an excellent relationship with UNICEF, which was a critical partner in a number of sectors, especially education. UNICEF had played a major role in financing many projects, including the Transforming Education Summit, and had assisted with the publication of national plans, which had then been distributed within Syria and abroad. Several years previously, UNICEF had supported a Syrian initiative that had enabled many children to continue their schooling by condensing two years of study into one.

75. According to studies conducted in the north-west of the country, girls interviewed said that they had lived in fear of rape or sexual assault. The north-west of Syria was not controlled by the Syrian Government but rather by groups, such as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, Da'esh and others, that appeared on Security Council terrorist lists. He noted also that children of foreign terrorist fighters faced problems in detention centres in the north-east of Syria. Those centres were outside of Government control and were in fact controlled by armed separatist militias. He asked if it would be possible to discuss the contribution of illegal economic sanctions to the economic deterioration of Syrian society, which constituted a major driver of early and forced marriage.

76. **Mr. Wijesekera** (Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Programme Group) said that

mainstreaming children's rights was a whole-of-government effort. With respect to children's digital rights, UNICEF and its partners had launched a number of initiatives to ensure that online space was safe for children. It would be delighted to provide any support or advice needed in drafting the forthcoming resolution on the rights of the child.

77. It could be challenging to maintain a focus on vulnerable children when mainstreaming children's rights. Children with disabilities were often the most vulnerable and the last reached. UNICEF had recently completed a disability-inclusion policy and strategy emphasizing, inter alia, disaggregated data collection. It had also recently released a data-driven report on children with disabilities.

78. In situations of conflict, it was essential to protect children from violence, particularly in the case of girls, who were at significant risk of sexual violence.

79. **The Chair** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

80. **Ms. Ekmektzoglou** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, Monaco and San Marino, said that respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of the child remained a common purpose around which all Member States could rally; States that had not yet done so should ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols. The European Union and its member States remained committed to ensuring that all children benefited from their policies and that children remained the primary consideration in all child-related actions.

81. School closures during the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively affected an entire generation of children, especially those already in the most vulnerable situations. The European Union would continue to devote special attention to vulnerable children and youth. In the context of the current work of the Third Committee, it would emphasize the right of every child to quality education.

82. The European Union would work actively to support the mandate of the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, and it encouraged States to endorse global initiatives such as the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Paris Principles), the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the

Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers (Vancouver Principles) and the Safe Schools Declaration. To promote equal educational opportunities for all children, it was important to support the development of and access to affordable, dependable and context-sensitive digital education. Girls required special attention in view of the gender digital divide.

83. The European Union was working to protect children from harmful online content, conduct, contact and consumer risks and to provide a safe, age-appropriate digital environment for all children. In preparation for the drafting of the annual resolution on the rights of the child, it would be reaching out to partners and stakeholders, most notably children, in accordance with its commitment to respect the right of all children to freely express their views on all matters affecting them and to have those views taken into account. The European Union would continue to pursue cooperation and political dialogue for the purpose of strengthening the rights of the child and to collaborate closely with all stakeholders.

84. **Ms. Liolocha** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that all SADC member States had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had a long-standing commitment to the advancement of children's rights. They were parties to international, continental and regional instruments on child labour and supported the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour, adopted in May 2022 at the fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Organization, which committed the participants to take measures to end child labour by 2025. The SADC member States recognized the need to develop and implement strategies to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, with a special focus on children. They celebrated 16 June each year as the Day of the African Child.

85. Education was a fundamental human right and an effective instrument for promoting sustainable development and breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty. It was important to provide access to quality affordable education without interruption until at least the minimum age of employment. The SADC Member States invested heavily in the education sector, including skills development programmes, and recognized the importance of keeping girls in school. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and conflict around the world continued to have serious consequences for the education of children in Africa. The SADC secretariat was working with the UNESCO Global Education Coalition to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on education.

86. In 2016, SADC had adopted the Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage. Some member States had made significant progress in outlawing child marriage and getting pregnant girls back in school after delivery. However, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change had reversed gains, increasing the need for investment. In Southern Africa, traditional and religious leaders had a key role to play in combatting child marriage, which was driven by religious and cultural practices.

87. SADC had developed programmes to assist orphans and vulnerable children. In recognition of the crucial role of the family, its member States had adopted family-oriented policies to protect children against exploitation and abuse. To combat the HIV and AIDS pandemic, they continued to promote access to health care, including universal health coverage.

88. Since the efforts of its member States were often hampered by inadequate human and financial resources, administrative issues and a lack of infrastructure, SADC appealed to its partners for further assistance. The multisectoral approach required to promote and protect the rights of children depended on strong partnership among the stakeholders, especially in times of crisis.

89. **Mr. Smith** (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that children were growing up in a particularly challenging time. For their sake, it was important to achieve all of the Sustainable Development Goals, not just the child-specific ones incorporating the goals of the 2002 Declaration and Plan of Action.

90. The CARICOM member States were committed to providing quality, equitable and inclusive education. At the recently concluded Transforming Education Summit, they had pledged to ensure that schools were inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy; to reform curricula and pedagogies; to expand access to early childhood education; to invest in digital infrastructure and devices and in training teachers and students in the use of digital technology; to facilitate the continuous professional development of teachers; to expand counselling and related support services; to provide special education training for teachers and supply communication and assistive technologies, and to focus on the psychosocial health and well-being of students and teachers. They remained resolved to ensure that girls had equal opportunity for education and development.

91. **Mr. Edokpa** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the rights, welfare, respect and protection of all children were a vital

component of the human and social development agenda. Implementation of the Plan of Action adopted in 2002 should emphasize ensuring a safe living environment, access to quality basic education, the elimination of discrimination, harmful practices and poverty. The Group remained committed to improving the quality of education and training at all levels and to ensuring the protection, survival and development of every child in Africa.

92. The increase in the number of children living in multidimensional poverty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic was a matter of concern. Moreover, school closures in the context of the pandemic had deepened pre-existing inequalities in access to education. Especially in view of the erosion of hard-won gains in ending child marriage and female genital mutilation during the pandemic, the Group applauded the comprehensive interventions that States continued to take, including the adoption of laws prohibiting child marriage and measures to eliminate female genital mutilation. It appealed for continued advocacy and support on the elimination harmful practices globally.

93. Ensuring the right to education in situations of conflict was key to protecting children. However, attacks and abductions targeting education and health-care facilities remained a challenge, threatening children's safety and lives. The Group applauded the countries that had committed to end and prevent grave violations of children's rights in armed conflicts, including their recruitment and use by armed groups, and it encouraged other countries to do the same.

94. With only eight years left before 2030, stronger partnerships were needed to fulfil the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda and the General Assembly resolution on a world fit for children.

95. **Mr. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that the Transforming Education Summit had been convened to reignite international commitment to education in a world of deepened structural educational inequalities and shrinking access to education for girls and young women. Attacks on schools and their use for military purposes had intensified in 2022. Liechtenstein encouraged Member States to endorse the Safe School Declaration, to stand together to protect schools from attack and to hold the attackers responsible.

96. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution placed a significant burden on the prospects of future generations, and young people were demanding intergenerational justice in the fight against climate change. States had a duty to address the root causes of climate change, with particular attention to its adverse impact on the rights of children. His delegation hoped

that the general comment on children's rights and the environment being drafted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child would provide insight into the nexus between children's rights and climate change, including with regard to how children could exercise their rights to information, participation and justice.

97. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure empowered young people to act as agents of change. Opened for signature in 2012, it had been ratified by only 50 States. Liechtenstein urged States that had not yet done so to ratify it and the other Optional Protocols.

98. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that the COVID-19 pandemic continued to exacerbate the socioeconomic crisis, whose consequences were felt primarily by children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was particularly important in that context because it emphasized the importance of the family environment and served as a key reference for the provision of assistance to vulnerable persons. Unfortunately, however, the Convention was not universal owing to the stance adopted by one State. That State's decision to ignore one of the most important instruments of international law was reprehensible.

99. It was equally disappointing that many Western countries of a neoliberal persuasion were attempting to abuse certain provisions of the Convention, in particular by promoting the idea that children should be granted comprehensive rights. They had apparently forgotten or chosen to keep quiet about provisions in the Convention on the guiding role played by parents and legal guardians and on the fact that the full and harmonious development of a child's personality required the sanctity of family life. Without the necessary attention from loved ones, the inexperienced and immature mind of a child could be subverted by the selfish interests of others. Decisions regarding a minor should therefore be taken in accordance with the guidance of parents or legal guardians, with due consideration for a child's developing abilities.

100. The Russian Federation unswervingly complied with its international legal obligations with regard to the protection of the rights of the child. In policy documents related to children, the Russian Government was mainly guided by the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, entitled "A world fit for children", and the Convention. It was currently working on an action plan for the period 2021–2027 to improve children's well-being and quality of life. Under the plan, it placed particular emphasis on assistance for children without parents and children with health-related limitations and provided for monthly

payments to improve the economic circumstances of low-income families with children between 8 and 16 years of age. Lastly, it was worth noting that the Ombudsman for Children's Rights of the Russian Federation had recently started work on a federal centre for the development of adolescent socialization programmes.

101. **Mr. Passmoor** (South Africa) said that the duty of States to educate, protect and provide equal opportunity for children had been difficult to fulfil in the midst of the global poverty and climate change crises, which had been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. In South Africa, violence against children and women had risen so dramatically during the pandemic that it had been dubbed the 'second pandemic'. Such violence should be addressed with the same urgency as the COVID-19 pandemic itself.

102. All sectors of society and all parts of the world should work to ensure social protection and education for all children and to protect all children from exploitation. With the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises threatening to reverse years of progress against child labour, South African urged Governments to endorse the Durban Call to Action.

103. **Mr. Buop** (Kenya) said that, in the 32 years since his country had become a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it had adopted national laws, policies and programmes implementing its provisions, and it had ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Its newly revised Children's Act addressed online abuse, child trafficking and radicalization, established a child welfare fund, increased budgetary allocations to cash transfer programmes for orphans and vulnerable children and give children with disabilities the right to appropriate medical treatment, special care, education and training free of charge.

104. Kenya was committed protecting children from all forms of violence by improving access to education, health information and child protection services. It had set a goal of eliminating child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation by 2030 and was working to discourage female genital mutilation through community dialogue and by promoting alternative rites of passage. However, child marriage and female genital mutilation were driven largely by poverty and gender inequality, both of which were exacerbated by climate change. Accelerated climate action and climate finance, in tune with the needs of developing countries, was essential.

105. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kenya had launched a multisectoral emergency response to

coordinate and advise on child protection measures. It was committed to providing equitable access to quality education and had allocated substantial funds for reforms targeting, inter alia, curricula improvement, secondary school enrolment and gender parity.

106. **Mr. Bin Jadid** (Saudi Arabia) said that laws of his country protected and promoted the rights of the child, without discrimination or restrictions. Saudi Arabia had taken a number of legislative, institutional and executive initiatives to promote those rights, including the Child Protection Act, which protected children under the age of 18 from abuse and neglect. Under the law, a number of acts were considered abuse or neglect, including causing school drop-outs, harassment, exposure to exploitation, the use of harsh insults and discrimination for any reason. In order to ensure that children enjoyed a sound upbringing, the law prohibited the production, publication, presentation or circulation of any work directed at children that provoked behaviour contrary to Islamic law, public order or public morals.

107. The Family Affairs Council had been established to ensure the cohesiveness of the family, its capacity to care for children and its adherence to religious values. In 2016, a 24-hour centre had been created to receive reports on domestic violence, including violence against children. A free helpline, a member of Child Helpline International, had been set up to receive complaints related to abuse, neglect or exploitation of children.

108. Prince Salman had launched an initiative to raise awareness of the importance of Internet safety for children, parents, teachers and decision-makers. The initiative addressed the drivers of online bullying, identity theft and indoctrination and raised awareness about suspicious online content. It also promoted the development of best practices and training programmes for teachers and decision-makers.

109. Saudi Arabia had also launched programmes in line with its Vision 2030, including an early childhood education programme. Recommendations would be made in order to improve services. An children's advisory committee had been established under the Family Affairs Council that was made up of 18 children between the ages of 11 and 18 with the aim of ensuring the right of children to express their views and contribute to policymaking. Promoting decision-making at such a young age would empower children to drive change, plan for the future and represent the country at international forums.

110. Saudi Arabia believed that the protection of children during armed conflict was a shared international responsibility. It welcomed the report of

the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, especially its recommendations pertaining to cooperation between the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, despite the report's attribution of incidents to the Coalition. The report highlighted the adoption by the Coalition, in accordance with international instruments, of effective measures to protect children in Yemen.

111. **Ms. Lipana** (Philippines) said that, in keeping with the responsibilities of the State under the Philippine Constitution, her country had enacted legislation to protect and promote the rights of children amidst the intersecting challenges of climate change, conflict and COVID-19, including a children's emergency relief and protection law, a law protecting children in situations of armed conflict and the provisions of the COVID-19 recovery law, that ensured the delivery of immunizations for preventable diseases and access to healthy meals for undernourished children.

112. The Philippines had developed a national strategic plan on child participation and would ensure their participation in the crafting of a children's magna carta. In 2022, it had enacted a law prohibiting child marriage, as well as a law punishing the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. However, the latter issue transcended national borders and demanded a global response.

113. **Mr. Tan Zhong Ming** (Singapore) said that, in most countries, the COVID-19 pandemic had set efforts to promote and protect the rights of children back decades, making the convening of the Transforming Education Summit in September 2022 especially timely. As a small city State with no natural resources except its people, Singapore made protecting, nurturing, and educating its children a priority. It had one of the lowest child mortality rates in the world, and Singapore students consistently performed well educationally. Aware that it could do more to ensure that no child was left behind, it was strengthening early childhood education for children in low-income, disadvantaged or troubled families, and it was investing significantly in programmes to improve students' digital literacy and equalize access to digital technologies. By 2024, all students 13 years of age or older would be equipped their own digital learning device, regardless of income level.

114. **Ms. Skoczek** (Poland) said that her country had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, and its laws incorporated the provisions

of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and of the European Union directive on combatting the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography. It had created special structures to enforce those laws, and it used all possible means to take down online child sexual abuse content, combat the sexual abuse of children in travel and tourism and prosecute traveling child sex offenders.

115. Poland was deeply concerned about the impact of the Russian war against Ukraine on children. Ukrainian children were being transferred to Russia, which had simplified citizenship procedures for children without parental care in order to facilitate their adoption into Russian families. Such actions violated both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*