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Chair: Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic)

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

Agenda item 26: Advancement of women (A/77/38, A/77/136, A/77/229, A/77/292, A/77/302 and A/77/312)

1. **Ms. Regnér** (Assistant Secretary-General and UN-Women Deputy Executive Director) said that, as the world continued to recover from the ongoing impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the urgency of climate change and the rise of violent conflict were having significant ripple effects across all nations, and the gendered impacts of those emergencies were often overlooked. The rates of violence against women and girls were alarmingly high, and global health, humanitarian and climate challenges exacerbated the drivers of such violence, including poverty, economic insecurity and displacement, increasing the need for a robust response and highlighting the importance of investing in prevention. Those challenges were unfolding against the backdrop of a global backlash on gender equality and women's rights, particularly women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, threatening to further undo decades of gains. The recently released report by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) entitled "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022" showed that the pandemic had slowed down progress on Goal 5 and that the world was not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030.

2. Women's representation in positions of power and decision-making remained below parity, underscoring the critical need for accelerated action. UN-Women was working to ensure that women and girls were placed at the centre of all response and recovery efforts. The three reports that had been prepared for the current session on behalf of the Secretary-General – on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (A/77/302), female genital mutilation (A/77/312) and trafficking in women and girls (A/77/292) – examined the impact of challenges to addressing violence against women and girls in all contexts and underscored the need for urgent action to increase prevention, address impunity, respond to survivors' needs and invest in preparedness.

3. The report of the Secretary-General on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls highlighted the urgent need to address violence in digital contexts. During the pandemic, States had reported a surge of online violence against women and girls and of violence facilitated by information and communications technology (ICT). A global study had found that at least 38 per cent of

women had experienced violence and 85 per cent of women had witnessed violence in digital contexts. Such violence occurred as part of a continuum of multiple, recurring and interrelated forms of violence across online and offline spaces, and online violence often preceded physical or sexual violence offline. The report outlined the extent of the problem, identified at-risk groups, highlighted the impacts and drivers of online violence and offered recommendations for future action.

4. Humanitarian and other emergency contexts had amplified the vulnerabilities to trafficking and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation, that women and girls already faced, placing them at higher risk of experiencing those forms of violence. In his report on trafficking in women and girls, the Secretary-General noted that the disproportionate economic impact of COVID-19 on women, coupled with the rise of digitalization, had placed women and girls at an even greater risk of being recruited and exploited. Human trafficking continued to disproportionately impact women and girls, who made up 92 per cent of victims for the purpose of sexual exploitation, the most detected form of trafficking in 2020.

5. In his report on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation, the Secretary-General noted the overall decline in prevalence of female genital mutilation globally. However, the decline was not happening quickly enough to keep pace with the increase in population growth in countries in which it was practiced. Moreover, the displacement of women and girls caused by climate change and conflicts increased the likelihood of their undergoing harmful practices. As a result, many high-prevalence States were still not on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goal target 5.3 of zero cases by 2030.

6. Despite the deeply gendered impacts of global crises, the needs of women and girls were not often considered and prioritized in crisis prevention and response. The three reports emphasized that the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls in all its forms must be prioritized and integrated in policy responses, including COVID-19 national plans and other humanitarian actions.

7. **Mr. Burbergs** (Latvia) said that since 2014 the war of Russia against Ukraine had brought killing and suffering to many civilians in Ukraine, and the human rights of women and girls were being violated. UN-Women had had a country office in Ukraine since 2015. He would be interested in hearing more about the work and achievements of UN-Women in Ukraine, as well as about the cooperation between UN-Women and

government, private and civil society partners in Ukraine to help women and girls in that country.

8. **Ms. Dregelid** (Norway) said that human rights, such as the right to freedom of expression and the right to organize, were under threat worldwide, including as a result of hate speech and digital violence. Women journalists, politicians and human rights defenders were highly exposed to digital violence, which was negatively affecting women's participation in public life. Media freedom and the safety of women journalists, activists and human rights defenders online should be reinforced. Targeted measures were also needed to address the grave and serious attacks against women for exercising their freedom of expression. Those attacks were often coordinated and highly sexualized, and were used as a strategic tool to silence the voices of women and girls. Respect for women's human rights and empowerment could not be taken for granted, and therefore challenges must be addressed as they emerged and tools must be developed accordingly. She asked what role UN-Women played in ensuring that women, professionally and otherwise, could exercise their right to freedom of expression and association.

9. **Ms. Bukuru** (United Kingdom) said that protecting and advancing the rights and freedoms of women and girls, including through education, empowerment and ending violence, was at the heart of her country's international development strategy. The United Kingdom deeply valued its partnership with UN-Women and its vital work on that shared goal. It also valued the leadership of UN-Women in preventing gender-based violence. Her delegation looked forward to continuing its collaboration at the International Conference on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, which would highlight ways to work in partnership to prevent conflict-related sexual violence, improve justice and accountability for that crime and explore how to better support survivors. She asked how Member States could work together, including at the United Nations, to prevent a rollback in longstanding normative commitments to women's rights, including to intergovernmental processes.

10. **Mr. Ruidíaz Pérez** (Chile) said that it was important to create an agenda aimed at tackling inequalities using an approach focused on diversity and intersectionality. Indigenous women were the backbone of their communities and had an essential role in maintaining and transmitting ancestral knowledge. As a leader of the Generation Equality Forum's Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality, Chile would fully support the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, including in the area of gender equality through information and

communications technology. As a result of the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, women had been forced to devote a significant amount of time to childcare duties without compensation, which emphasized the need to promote formal employment and provide more childcare facilities to enable women to participate in the workforce.

11. His delegation welcomed the work of UN-Women in combating sexual and gender-based violence around the world, particularly in countries where the work was needed urgently, such as Afghanistan.

12. **Mr. Wang Zixu** (China) said that his Government attached great importance to the protection of women's rights and was implementing in good faith the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Women were increasingly represented in political positions, their levels of education and health were improving, and their rights were fully protected under the law. In particular, his delegation noted the correlation between violence against women and the climate change crisis, which had worsened the environment for survival and development of women. All countries should increase their efforts to address climate change, incorporate gender equality and awareness into all aspects of that work, and pay special attention to the needs of women in pandemic recovery and the climate crisis.

13. At the same time, the international community should uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibility and developed countries should bear the obligation of providing financial and technical support to developing countries, especially small island developing States, so as to strengthen their capacities to address climate change, and eliminate the factors of prejudice and violence against women that had been brought about by climate change.

14. China was ready to enhance exchanges and cooperation with other countries to collectively address climate change, accelerate the green recovery and combat all violence against women, and promote the cause of global gender equality.

15. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, as a country that had experienced numerous cases of attempted trafficking of women and children, the Syrian Arab Republic stressed the necessity of providing medical, psychological and especially legal assistance to survivors of trafficking. The issue of reputational risk was important, and he asked how reputational risk, physical threats and false statements in digital contexts could best be addressed. Furthermore, according to the report of the Secretary-General on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women

and girls (A/77/302), one in three women were subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. He asked whether that number was accurate and how it had been arrived at.

16. **Ms. Carlé** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that her delegation valued the leadership and invaluable contribution of UN-Women to the realization of gender equality in the world, in particular at a time when women's and girls' full and equal enjoyment of all human rights were under increased pressure. In Afghanistan, there had been a rollback of the achievements made in recent decades. In Iran, there were nationwide protests of women calling to reclaim their rights following the death of Mahsa Amini, who had died in police custody after her arrest for wearing what had been perceived as an improper hijab.

17. Conflict was a risk multiplier for human trafficking. Following the Russian aggression against Ukraine, civil society organizations had reported an increase in sexual and gender-based violence. The European Union had adopted a strategy on combating trafficking in human beings, which provided a framework for addressing the challenges emerging from the war. Given that most of the people fleeing Ukraine were women and children, a gender perspective would be mainstreamed and a human-rights approach would guide the implementation of the strategy. She would like to hear more about what Member States could do to address the gender inequalities that created economic and social vulnerabilities for women and girls and reduce their risk of being trafficked, especially during conflicts, and how States could ensure that perpetrators were held accountable.

18. Violence against women and girls was not limited to conflicts. More needed to be done to prevent and respond to both online and offline violence targeted towards women and girls. The Generation Equality process and the Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality, among others, offered tools for combating online violence. What could Member States do to effectively prevent and respond to online violence against women and girls?

19. **Ms. Vásquez Muñoz** (Mexico) said that her country was a member of the Executive Board of UN-Women and had recently hosted the Generation Equality Forum, during which commitments including the Global Alliance for Care had been made. Her delegation agreed with UN-Women on the need to improve accountability mechanisms and attract more investments and commitments. Mexico had joined the Generation Equality Forum's accountability group,

aimed at bringing transparency to the work of its action coalitions. Her Government had recently established the "Ellas Fund" to benefit women's projects throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Those were examples of practical initiatives launched by her Government to promote gender-sensitive policies and prioritize the protection of the rights of women and girls in its actions. She would like to know how States could incorporate the voices of civil society organizations, feminist women's groups and young people in the processes led by UN-Women.

20. **Ms. Millard** (United States of America) said that the reporting by the Special Rapporteur was instrumental to raising awareness of the scale of acts of violence against women and girls and the toll they exacted on societies, as well as to aiding Member States in holding perpetrators to account and in delivering justice and effective support services to survivors. The United States had issued its first national strategy on gender equity and equality, outlining its tireless pursuit of the ideals that embodied that concept, including the goal of life without the threat of gender-based violence. In addition, the Violence Against Women Act had been signed into the law, improving prevention and response and increasing resources for survivors.

21. Gender-based violence was a deprivation of an individual's human rights, represented a fundamental imbalance in the power structure of societies and had deleterious effects on development, economic growth, health, safety and security. Her country was particularly mindful of the disproportionate targeting of members of traditionally marginalized and vulnerable populations that experienced multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. States needed to work together to put an end to all forms of gender-based violence. She asked what were systemic enablers of gender-based violence and obstacles to enforcement, and how States could work collectively to eliminate them.

22. **Ms. Ruhama** (Malaysia) said that her delegation echoed the recommendation contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/292) that trafficking in women and girls should be recognized as a form of gender-based violence. The vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking was undeniable, demonstrated by the fact that a high percentage of victims were women and girls. The underlying problems of patriarchal culture and social norms in some societies further increased the risk of women and girls being subjected to gender-based violence and trafficking. Malaysia was committed to combating human trafficking, including by applying the three "P" strategy, namely protecting victims by providing benefits and services, prosecuting human trafficking crimes and preventing further trafficking-

related crimes. She asked how receptive stakeholders were to the idea of recognizing trafficking as a form of gender-based violence, as well as the foreseen challenges in getting such formal recognition, and what were the next steps that should be taken once trafficking in women and girls was formally recognized as a form of gender-based violence.

23. **Ms. Regnér** (Assistant Secretary-General and UN-Women Deputy Executive Director) said that, with regard to the situation in Ukraine, she had recently met with the Ukrainian Commissioner for Gender Equality and the new Resident Coordinator in the country. Following the invasion by the Russian Federation, UN-Women was working in Ukraine to assist women and girls, including in the area of trafficking-related prevention and justice, and to support civil society organizations and Government agencies to address the humanitarian situation of women in the country. It was also supporting United Nations agencies on the humanitarian frontline, including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and other governmental, civil society and private sector organizations in the areas of gender equality, implementation of the Istanbul Convention and women's participation and economic opportunities.

24. Norway had been leading the response in supporting the work of human rights defenders, including in the Security Council, and had been working in collaboration with UN-Women on initiatives to support women activists in war and conflict zones. There were various frameworks within the United Nations aimed at supporting human rights and women's rights defenders.

25. In response to the representative of the United Kingdom, she said that UN-Women welcomed the significant support of Member States in addressing sexual violence in armed conflict, as well as the fact that the issue was much more prominent in the Security Council and that there had been an increase in women briefers. However, there was a need for Member States to prioritize the establishment of systems for implementation, carry out active outreach to ensure the presence of women in positions of influence and provide increased funding to women's organizations working to promote gender equality.

26. The role of Chile in Generation Equality and the Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality was welcomed. The sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the priority theme of which would be "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of

all women and girls", would provide an excellent opportunity to continue discussions on how women could have more influence and rights in the digital context.

27. With regard to what could be done to combat trafficking in women and girls, it was important to address the fact that the majority of people who bought women who were sexually exploited were men living in peaceful countries. It was therefore necessary to consider how men's behaviour should change and how they could better support women. In terms of preventing trafficking, women needed to know their rights and the issue needed to be addressed very quickly during conflicts, which had been the case in Ukraine. It was necessary to ensure alternative livelihood sources and to consider the fact that some people were prepared to exploit women's desperation, either as traffickers or by buying sex from women. Member States should consider prioritizing those issues in their action plans and providing adequate financing to address them.

28. In response to the Syrian Arab Republic, she said that in accordance with data of the World Health Organization, one third of women had experienced sexual violence. With regard to the courageous protests in Iran following the killing of Mahsa Amini, mentioned by the representative of the United Kingdom, UN-Women and other United Nations agencies had made statements calling for an investigation and justice.

29. She thanked the delegation of Mexico for its leadership in and support to the Generation Equality Forum. She also thanked the delegation of the United States for its support to UN-Women and took note of the country's strategy on gender equity and equality and efforts to combat gender-based violence. Although there had been positive developments in recent years in terms of new legislation and reforms in many Member States, what was lacking were systems for implementation and funding. It was also necessary to address harmful gender roles and encourage men to show solidarity and participate in gender equality work.

30. She agreed that it was important to protect victims and prevent crimes. The reports had explored the links between gender-based violence and trafficking and she hoped that the issue could be discussed further, including by the Commission on the Status of Women.

31. **Ms. Keita** (Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director for the Programme of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that the report of the Secretary-General on intensifying efforts to end obstetric fistula within a decade ([A/77/229](#)) was submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/159](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-

General to submit a report to it at its seventy-seventh session on the implementation of that resolution under the item entitled “Advancement of women”. Obstetric fistula was one of the most serious injuries that could occur during childbirth, leaving a hole between the birth canal and the bladder and/or rectum. It was caused by prolonged, obstructed labour, without timely medical intervention. Half a million women and girls worldwide were living with the condition, and thousands of new cases occurred every year. The report testified to the severe medical, social, psychological and economic consequences if left untreated. Aside from urinary incontinence, 90 per cent of cases resulted in stillbirth, and neurological disorders, infections, kidney failure and infertility often accompanied the condition. Obstetric fistula affected the poorest and most marginalized women and girls, who were denied access to quality healthcare, equality and dignity. Ending obstetric fistula was integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, delivering on the promise of the International Conference on Population and Development of leaving no one behind. As a UNFPA Country Representative, she had witnessed the agony and suffering endured by women and girls with the condition.

32. Despite recent setbacks, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, progress had been made. Fistula was preventable and could be ended by 2030 if all women and girls had access to quality maternal, sexual and reproductive health-care services, including emergency obstetric and newborn care and universal health coverage. However, progress in advancing sexual reproductive health globally had been slow. Given that child marriage and adolescent and early pregnancy put girls at risk of violence, mortality and morbidity, including fistula, community empowerment and participation were needed. Receiving treatment and the necessary follow-up allowed survivors to be reintegrated into their communities. The report presented five strategic recommendations for urgent action: prevention and treatment; financial support; reintegration strategies; advocacy and awareness-raising; and research, data and evidence in action.

33. **Ms. Dale** (Norway) said that her delegation commended the indispensable work and efforts of UNFPA around the world. Ensuring women had the right to decide over their own bodies was a core priority for her country. The role of UNFPA in ensuring women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights and women’s bodily autonomy was of great importance. To combat fistula, it was necessary to work together to strengthen access to those rights, which were essential for the

health and well-being of all. Norway remained deeply committed to UNFPA and its mandate, as a main partner in that work.

34. **Ms. Vázquez Muñoz** (Mexico) said that her delegation welcomed the work undertaken by UNFPA aimed at mitigating the suffering of the most vulnerable women and girls worldwide. It also acknowledged the leadership of UNFPA in the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalition on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The coordinated work of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in the areas of sexual and reproductive health-care services, access to comprehensive sexuality education, specialized comprehensive services that took into account the psychosocial health of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and the provision of effective legal assistance, was essential. Sexual and gender-based violence was a multi-causal and multidimensional phenomenon that reflected acts of discrimination associated with persistent misogynistic practices worldwide. Her delegation would be interested in hearing more about collaboration between States in collecting data and developing indicators to measure the progress achieved through the provision of mental health and psychosocial support services for survivors of sexual violence and what could be improved in that regard.

35. **Ms. Bukuru** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation commended the lifesaving work of UNFPA. Progress on universal and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights was a top priority for her Government, as reflected in its manifesto on ending preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children by 2030. That included providing timely and quality obstetric care, essential for ending obstetric fistula. As part of a comprehensive approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights, safe abortion was of critical importance. Her delegation looked to UNFPA to take an assertive, evidence-based approach aligned with the guidelines of the World Health Organization on safe abortion. Only through fully respecting bodily autonomy would it be possible to realize gender equality and ensure that women and girls were empowered to reach their full potential. She asked how Member States could rally together to improve maternal health services and protect and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

36. **Ms. Sánchez García** (Colombia) said that her delegation was grateful that the cases of women affected by obstetric fistula had been highlighted. They were a reminder of why some States had made repeated calls for sexual health and reproductive rights to be included in discussions.

37. **Ms. Keita** (Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director for the Programme of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that women's issues were interrelated and intersected and therefore UNFPA was working in coordination with UN-Women, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on a range of issues related to gender-based violence and maternal mortality. It was grateful to the donors that had made voluntary contributions to UNFPA, as well as to supporters that had rallied against pushbacks. She called on Member States to continue to support the work of UNFPA, as well as to ensure that women and girls remained a priority for all, which was essential for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

38. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)) said that, since October 2021, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had held dialogues with 26 States parties in Geneva and had made concluding observations on their reports. In June 2022, the Committee had decided to make the simplified reporting procedure the main procedure for the consideration of State party reports. The Committee had also assessed the reports of 17 States parties in follow-up on the concluding observations. In its assessments, it had recognized the legislative, budgetary or other measures taken by States parties in areas including the advancement of women, gender-based violence, political participation and economic empowerment. One of the Committee's main achievements over the previous 40 years had been to ensure that women had access to justice at the international level. In that regard, the Committee had acted on 11 individual complaints during the previous year, finding violations in cases related to gender-based violence against women, obstetric violence and discrimination against a lesbian woman activist, among others.

39. The Committee had developed 38 general recommendations since its creation. At its eighty-third session, the Committee would adopt its general recommendation No. 39, on the rights of Indigenous women and girls. It would be the first time that a human rights treaty body issued guidance focused exclusively on discrimination faced by Indigenous women and girls. The Committee was grateful to the Government of Mexico for its financial support, as well as to UN-Women and the United Nations Children's Fund for their technical support.

40. Armed conflicts around the world were negatively affecting the human rights of women, as well as their

families, communities and societies, and sexual violence in various extreme forms continued to be used as a weapon of war. States parties had an obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent and protect women and girls from all forms of gender-based violence by State and non-State actors, including in armed conflict, and to prosecute perpetrators. The Committee supported peace negotiation efforts in the context of ongoing and emerging armed conflicts. It had used its reporting procedure to raise concerns about violations of women's rights in two ongoing armed conflicts. In February 2022, it had established a working group to monitor the situation of Ukrainian women and girls and to engage with national and international stakeholders, as well as other United Nations treaty bodies. On 18 and 19 October 2022, the Committee would consider the ninth periodic report of Ukraine during its eighty-third session in Geneva. In November 2021, the Committee had established a working group on Afghanistan. In the first interaction of a human rights treaty body with the de facto Afghan authorities, it had also requested the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to submit a report on the situation of women and girls in the country since 15 August 2021. In April 2022, the Committee had accompanied the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences on a joint technical visit to Kabul.

41. Hurricanes, floods and forest fires continued to increase in many parts of the world. Natural disasters and climate change posed an existential threat to women's livelihoods, especially for Indigenous women and girls, who were greatly affected by risks related to climate change, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity and barriers to accessing food and water security. In general recommendation No. 39 on the rights of Indigenous women and girls, it was recommended that States parties ensured that Indigenous women and girls had equal opportunities to participate in decision-making related to the environment, disaster risk reduction and climate change.

42. **Ms. Alonso Giganto** (Spain) said that, in a context in which the human rights of women and girls continued to be threatened by inequalities, discrimination and gender-based violence, Spain had made gender equality one of its domestic and foreign policy priorities. It welcomed decision 80/VI of the Committee to maintain Spanish as its third official working language, and supported decisions 80/I and 80/II, requesting an exceptional report on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and establishing a task force to consider the impact of the evolving political, economic and social situation in Afghanistan on the rights of women and girls. Her country was deeply concerned about the

dramatic disappearance of women and girls from all spheres of public life and the systematic violation of their human rights.

43. Spain welcomed the progress made in the countries examined, especially in those in conflict or crisis. Prohibiting women's right to freely decide over their bodies and restricting the right to safe and legal abortion was an affront to their human rights and dignity and constituted gender-based discrimination. Her delegation asked what progress was being made in that regard and how such setbacks could be prevented. It would also like to hear more about the progress made in eliminating multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls with disabilities. The Committee should update its general recommendation No. 18 (1991) on disabled women to bring it in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and international human rights standards. The goal was not to leave women with disabilities behind when it came to national efforts to advance gender equality and women's rights, including gender-based violence against women and trafficking and sexual exploitation.

44. **Ms. Akita** (Japan) said that, together with the Committee, the international community had made hard-won progress in the elimination of discrimination against women in the recent decades. Given that the elimination of discrimination against women was key to the advancement of women, more interaction between the Committee and the Third Committee would be beneficial. Her delegation would be grateful if the Chair could share ideas for further collaboration between the two committees and her views on how States parties could cooperate. It would also be interested in hearing more about measures to reduce the gender pay gap, as equal pay was a key element of article 11 of the Convention. Her Government had recently made it mandatory for companies with 301 or more employees to disclose gender pay gaps. What were effective measures to narrow the gender pay gap?

45. **Ms. Ruhama** (Malaysia) said that active and meaningful participation of women in society was important in ensuring a more inclusive society. Her country strongly advocated for gender equality and the empowerment of women, and had formulated targeted policies to ensure that women and girls had equal opportunities in all spheres of life. The twelfth Malaysia Plan for 2021–2025 included dedicated measures to advance women's issues, demonstrating the Government's commitment and political will towards more inclusive, accessible development for women, in line with the country's Shared Prosperity Vision 2030.

46. Malaysia was fully committed to implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and had recently submitted its sixth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The report covered developments and progress made domestically between 2017 and 2021 and provided an update on policies, initiatives and concrete measures undertaken by the Government in eliminating discrimination against women.

47. Malaysia would continue to play an active role regionally and internationally in advancing the empowerment of women and stood ready to learn from others and share best practices on initiatives to enhance women's participation. She asked whether there would be training and capacity-building programmes for States parties to continuously improve their country reports and promote the obligations under the Convention.

48. **Ms. Ludwig** (Germany) said that Germany remained proudly committed to upholding the rights enshrined in the Convention. Unfortunately, the Convention was under renewed attack, including by States that had previously made the empowerment of women one of their core principals. In the light of that worrying development, Germany fully reaffirmed its commitment to promoting full legal and de facto gender equality and erasing the barriers that women and girls faced in different contexts. The empowerment of women was not possible without the fulfilment of all women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, the protection of all women and girls against sexual and gender-based violence and the equal and meaningful participation of all women in all spheres of public life.

49. Germany urged all States that had not yet done so to accede to the Convention and its Optional Protocol. There was still widespread discrimination and stigma surrounding sexual and reproductive health and rights, including menstrual hygiene, which meant that women and girls, but also men, often lacked basic information in that context. As a result, women often did not enjoy full bodily autonomy, and were left alone to suffer with little to no support. Her delegation would be interested in hearing more about ways in which the Chair was seeking to address the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the work of the Committee.

50. **Ms. Vásquez Muñoz** (Mexico) said that her delegation welcomed the fact that general recommendation No. 39 on the rights of Indigenous women and girls incorporated an intersectional approach. Mexico promoted the leadership of Indigenous women and girls within and outside their

communities, as well as the preservation of their identities through their languages, cultures and traditional knowledge. However, it noted with concern the additional barriers faced by Indigenous girls and women to the enjoyment of fundamental rights, such as access to justice or information in Indigenous languages. The importance of Indigenous languages in asserting the rights of Indigenous women and girls was undeniable. She asked how public policies should be developed to guarantee effective access to justice for Indigenous women and girls.

51. **Mr. Ruidíaz Pérez** (Chile) said that his Government defined itself as a feminist Government committed to incorporating a gender perspective in all State actions. In that context, gender advisors had been appointed in each of the 24 government ministries, 15 of which were headed by women ministers. Chile was also developing a feminist foreign policy. Among the many challenges it sought to address, his Government was taking decisive steps to eliminate violence against women and girls and had recently submitted a bill to the National Congress to ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization. It had also presented bills on the right of women to a life free of violence and on improving procedural guarantees, protecting the rights of victims of sexual crimes and avoiding their re-victimization. As a candidate for election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2023–2025, Chile would work to ensure that the human rights of women and girls remained a priority on the international agenda.

52. **Mr. Alegre** (Portugal) said that Portugal had been the first State member of the European Union to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). The country was a strong supporter of the women and peace and security agenda and was committed to implementing its national action plan in line with Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). During a constructive dialogue with the Committee on his country's tenth periodic report, the Portuguese Secretary of State for Equality had affirmed the commitment of Portugal to act in accordance with the recommendations made, which would help to achieve the goal of guaranteeing equality between women and men and realizing the human rights of all women and girls. The conclusions and recommendations of the Committee, as well as its general comments, had contributed to the advances made by Portugal in that context. His delegation thanked the Committee for embracing the simplified reporting procedure.

53. Portugal had adopted measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the human rights of women and girls. It was also working to combat segregation and stereotypes in the labour market, reduce the gender pay gap and prevent and eliminate domestic violence, as well as provide support to survivors. It had also promoted parity in central and local government positions, including in the current Ministerial Cabinet.

54. His delegation was concerned about the pushbacks against the rights of women and girls around the world, who faced multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and whose rights to life, freedom of opinion and expression, health, education and work were being violated. He asked how the Committee could contribute to protecting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls.

55. **Ms. Carlé** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that her delegation called on all States that had not yet done so to accede to the Convention and its Optional Protocol. States parties should review any reservations and withdraw those that were contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention. In that context, it was important to highlight the situation in Iran, where people were fighting for the ability to exercise their fundamental right to assemble and protest following Mahsa Amini's abuse by the morality police and her death in custody. The European Union condemned the use of violence against women and urged Iran to conduct prompt, thorough, independent, impartial and transparent investigations into Ms. Amini's death.

56. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to exacerbate the challenges and barriers facing women and girls globally, including access to sexual and reproductive health-care services. Her delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on, matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. It also stressed the need for universal access to quality and affordable sexual and reproductive health information, education and health-care services, and noted the relevant contributions of the Generation Equality Forum. She asked what conclusions had been drawn from the reports by States under review during the previous year in terms of priority actions that should be implemented to achieve gender equality and to respond to the long-term challenges raised by the COVID-19 crisis. Her delegation would also like to receive an update regarding the ongoing work on the general recommendation on the rights of Indigenous women and girls.

57. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that she was grateful for the support of delegations and that it was extremely important for States parties to be proactive in their support of the Committee. She agreed with the representative of Spain that the Committee needed to focus more on the rights of women and girls with disabilities and that its general recommendation No. 18 (1991) on disabled women should be updated.

58. In response to the representative of Japan, she noted that the Committee had raised the issue of the gender pay gap in all its dialogues with States parties. It was a problem in both developing and developed countries, and was therefore included in strategies to ensure the Committee's mandates were achieved. With regard to the question of Malaysia on how the Committee could support States parties to improve their country reports and meet their obligations under the Convention, the Committee needed more resources to assist States in that area.

59. She agreed with the representative of Germany that sexual and reproductive rights were at the heart of the Committee's mandate, and the Committee had made a statement regarding its serious concern following the decision made to restrict the right to abortion in the United States of America. In response to Mexico, the elimination of discrimination against Indigenous women and girls was a priority for the Committee, and it was essential for justice to be made accessible to Indigenous women, including by providing services in their languages, ensuring that there were Indigenous women judges within the system and establishing a dialogue between Indigenous justice and State justice systems.

60. The Committee was grateful to Chile for its efforts to develop a feminist foreign policy. The issue of justice was essential, and general recommendation No. 33 (2015) provided information on ensuring that women had access to justice, in particular in cases of violence.

61. States parties needed to work together to protect the Committee, the human rights treaty bodies and the multilateral system as a whole from pushbacks. Regional bodies and conventions, including the Istanbul Convention, provided significant support to international mandates and also needed special protection.

62. Although Iran had not ratified the Convention, the Committee was deeply concerned about the situation in that country. Gender equality needed to be enshrined not only in legislative frameworks but also in the concrete practices of States. The COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated how it was possible to go backwards in

those areas in terms of women's health and work. The Committee would adopt general recommendation No. 39 at its session on 26 October 2022.

63. **Ms. Estrada-Tanck** (Chair of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls) said that gender equality and women's rights were under increasing attack around the world. The rise of authoritarian, nationalist and fundamentalist actors had had disastrous consequences for gender equality, sexual and reproductive health rights and girls' right to education. As the Working Group had indicated in its most recent report to the Human Rights Council, on girls' and young women's activism (A/HRC/50/25), although women and girls were at the forefront social justice, gender equality and sustainability initiatives, they continued to face many challenges rooted in the intersection of gender and age.

64. Children and young people in general were often treated as incapable of making decisions about their lives or participating in public debates, but girls faced even greater barriers. Many were told from a young age that their place was in the home, and they frequently had very limited time for activism because of household and care duties. Moreover, parents often gave priority to their sons' education.

65. Authoritarian or overprotective parents set much stricter limits for girls and young women, owing to gender stereotypes and patriarchal social norms. Parental reactions to girls' and young women's activism ranged from a lack of support to threats and violence.

66. Access to education remained problematic, particularly in rural or precarious settings. Girls and young women often were not well enough informed of their rights to be able to exercise them as activists. Other major barriers included early and forced marriages, forced, unwanted or child pregnancies, female genital mutilation, sexual violence and restricted access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and goods.

67. Lack of safety and security were also major obstacles. Attacks, harassment and violence in the street and on public transport limited girls' and young women's activities and travel outside the home. In the current political and social climate, girls and young women faced increased risk of harassment and violence when engaging on themes related to gender equality. In reprisal for their activism, they might suffer domestic violence or be separated from their children. They were sometimes forced to abandon their activism in order to ensure the economic survival of their families. Online harassment and violence facilitated by ICTs also discouraged activism.

68. Girls often did not register their organizations because of costly registration processes, minimum age barriers or a requirement to have a bank account. Worldwide, women's organizations dedicated to girls were disproportionately underfunded.

69. The empowerment of girls and young women was an indispensable precondition for just, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable societies. States had an obligation to recognize and respect girls' and young women's rights and to create an enabling environment for their exercise. She called on all actors to build strong bridges with young activists and include them in decision-making processes.

70. **Ms. Chan Valverde** (Costa Rica) said that, because of systemic injustices, the COVID-19 pandemic and the triple environmental crises disproportionately impacted women and girls, who were at the forefront of the fight for human rights, environmental sustainability and democracy. She would like to know how the United Nations system could work with the States, the private sector and women's and girls' organizations to support the creation of safe digital spaces for women and girls to build alliances and how implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment could promote the realization of women's and girls' rights.

71. **Mr. Cheng Liang** (Malaysia) said that Malaysia had taken a variety of measures to protect women and girls online. He wondered what international organizations could do to support State efforts to keep pace with evolving digital threats to women and children and how the private sector could be encouraged to develop digital products to reduce online abuse.

72. **Ms. Gunderson** (United States of America) said that her Government planned to more than double cooperation funding for gender equality and women's empowerment. She would like to know how Member States could further the efforts of the Working Group to combat discrimination against women and girls.

73. **Ms. Vásquez Muñoz** (Mexico) said that her Government sought to empower women and girls as agents of change. She asked where there might be common ground at the multilateral level to promote spaces for strengthening girls' and young women's activism.

74. **Ms. Matheï** (Belgium) said that States should ensure the availability of quality sexual and reproductive health care and recognize abortion as essential health care. She would appreciate information on good practices and promising developments in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

75. **Ms. Carlé** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that women and girls had taken the lead in a new wave of feminist, democratic and environmental activism, including in Iran, where they had sparked protests following the death of Mahsa Amini. The European Union remained committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of all persons to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, and stressed the need for universal access to quality and affordable sexual and reproductive health information. It would work to strengthen the protection of women and girls from all forms of violence during armed conflict and to ensure accountability for such violence. She asked how States could enable meaningful contact between decision-makers and women human rights defenders.

76. **Ms. Raban** (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom was working to promote and protect women and girl's rights and freedoms in the face of increasing global threats. It had recently joined the new Alliance for Feminist Movements, a collaborative, multi-stakeholder initiative working to mobilize support for women's rights organizations and movements. Her delegation wished to know how stakeholders could work together more effectively to prevent reprisals and intimidation of women and girl activists.

77. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that wives and children of foreign terrorist fighters were stranded in illegal prisons in north-east Syria because some countries refused to repatriate their citizens. He wished to know if the Chair of the Working Group considered such refusals an attempt to evade responsibility and what she could do to encourage repatriation of the prisoners.

78. **Ms. Estrada-Tanck** (Chair of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls), responding to the question about the creation of safe digital spaces that promoted girls' activism, said that human rights mechanisms needed to encourage multi-layered dialogue with digital platform providers, with an emphasis on the laws, norms and standards of international human rights, and States should require digital corporations to comply with human rights standards, including gender equality and the rights of girls.

79. Girls' and young women's distrust of institutions extended to international institutions, including the United Nations. Human rights mechanisms and United Nations bodies such as the General Assembly should do more to ensure that the voices of girls were heard. The

Working Group itself was engaging actively with girls' organizations for that purpose.

80. Member States could help the Working Group combat discrimination against women and girls by ratifying the relevant conventions and by investing in gender- and child-sensitive education, examining intersecting forms of discrimination and implementing cross-cutting measures, policies and laws to promote gender equality. They should also decriminalize abortion and ensure access to sexual and reproductive health rights, goods and services.

81. Regarding the creation of girl-inclusive institutional spaces, the report cited the example of one State that had set up numerous youth parliaments, and similar parliaments could also be organized at the national and regional levels. The report also provided examples of national frameworks that gave girls a role in decision-making. It was important not only to let girls' voices be heard but also to take what they said seriously and ensure that their contributions informed the public policies and norms affecting them.

82. The report also pointed to the need to eliminate funding barriers and age barriers and to implement measures that struck a balance between protecting girls and empowering them. The right to sexual and reproductive health care and services, including abortion, should be protected by law.

83. She had issued a number of statements, including jointly with other human rights mechanisms, urging Governments to repatriate women and children held in Syrian encampments. National origin, ethnic origin or religious beliefs should not be used as a pretext for depriving women or girls of their human rights. While situations differed, gender equality and universal human rights should be a general priority in resolving repatriation issues.

84. **Ms. Alsalem** (Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences), introducing her report on violence against women and girls in the context of the climate crisis, including environmental degradation and related disaster risk mitigation and response (A/77/136), said that attempts to control what women and girls said, thought and wore, as well as to deny them access to sexual and reproductive rights, were on the rise. Climate change acted as a threat multiplier and its impacts were felt more severely by those who were already marginalized, including women and girls.

85. Available evidence clearly demonstrated that the impact of climate change aggravated all types of gender-based violence against women and girls. In the

aftermath of natural disasters, the likelihood of violence against them multiplied, especially when they were displaced or in emergency shelters, in part because of limited access to reporting and protection mechanisms. The risks of human trafficking, family separation and orphaning also increased. With both large-scale natural disasters and slow-onset environmental degradation, loss of livelihoods and limited resources forced women and girls into sexual exploitation in exchange for food, basic needs or access to land for food production. Droughts drove women and girls to seek water farther from home in unfamiliar areas or without the usual precautions. As conflicts over land intensified, women were increasingly subject to violence or threats of violence aimed at disappropriating their land. The extractive industry, energy- and production-related ventures, commercial logging and extractive energy sourcing had had negative, gendered and often violent consequences for which there were little or no accountability. Women environmental defenders were particularly at risk of violence.

86. Slow-onset climate events exacerbated domestic and intimate partner violence. In addition to physical violence, there had been reports of women and girls experiencing depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and post-traumatic stress disorder as a direct or indirect result of climate change. The reduced privacy offered by shelters was a form of psychological violence.

87. Overall, climate change increased gender and intergenerational poverty and the economic burden on women, reducing their ability to achieve financial independence. Where climate impacts caused male out-migration, women needed to earn income in addition to performing their existing responsibilities. Economic stress, loss of livelihoods and heightened food insecurity promoted negative coping mechanisms, including forced marriage, harmful traditional practices and taking girls out of school early.

88. In national climate strategies, women were generally seen only as a vulnerable group, not actors with agency, and girls were rarely acknowledged. While women's organizations were among the first to respond to a crisis, women and girls were not part of the decision-making process. She urged States not to ignore the clear and cumulative effects of the climate crisis on women and girls. Any effective response to the impacts of climate change must keep the gendered impact front and centre. It was also imperative to address the causes of gender-based violence and to remain committed to a whole-of-society approach.

89. **Ms. Stanciu** (Romania) said that her Government remained fully committed to the defence of gender

equality and women's and girls' human rights. The perception that harassing or being violent towards women was normal and acceptable must change.

90. **Mr. González Behmaras** (Cuba) said that his country had a high proportion of women managing its disaster risk reduction and early warning centres. He would value the Special Rapporteur's opinion on the impact of unilateral coercive measures on women's quality of life and on discrimination and violence against them.

91. **Mr. Biryukov** (Russian Federation) said that the measures proposed by the Special Rapporteur were ambiguous and rooted in dubious concepts. Although the needs of women and girls should be taken into account in response to natural disasters, objectively speaking, the impact on gender did not need to be front and centre of all approaches to the climate crisis as the Special Rapporteur had proposed.

92. In addition, his delegation suggested avoiding the use of expressions that did not enjoy consensus, such as "women of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities", "gendered impacts of climate change" and "gendered iniquities". The way in which gender intersected with other aspects of power relations and identities, and data on "persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities" and "same-sex couples", were also irrelevant to the topic.

93. **Ms. Murphy** (Australia) said that States had an important role to play in addressing the disproportionately high rates of violence against Indigenous women. Australia would appreciate the Special Rapporteur's insights on focusing limited resources for maximum effect.

94. **Ms. Brandt** (Netherlands) said that France and the Netherlands would be facilitating the biannual draft resolution on the intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, which would focus that year on gender stereotypes and negative social norms.

95. **Ms. Vásquez Muñoz** (Mexico) asked how the United Nations mandate-holders could achieve coherence in their efforts to promote a human rights and gender equality-based approach to climate change.

96. **Ms. Sánchez García** (Colombia), emphasizing that women should be seen as agents of change in climate adaption, asked how States could help to perpetuate collaboration between the Special Rapporteur and the Commission on the Status of Women.

97. **Ms. Zoghbi** (Lebanon) said that, in the Middle East, the number of femicides had surged in 2022. Shockingly, some people cited the way the victim dressed or lived as a justification for her murder. She asked the Special Rapporteur's opinion on the cause of the recent upsurge.

98. **Ms. Broderick** (Ireland), noting the importance of an intersectional approach to promoting gender equality, said that her delegation welcomed the call for a whole-of-society approach and agreed that women and girls should be seen as resilient change-makers. She would appreciate any practical advice or examples of best practice in those areas.

99. **Ms. Matheï** (Belgium) said that it was essential to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls at all levels and stages of environmental and climate-related decision-making, as well as to address the root causes of violence against women and girls in the context of climate change. She asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on good practices for increasing women's access to legal services, including with regard to land.

100. **Ms. Millard** (United States of America) said that her Government supported the efforts of UN-Women. She would appreciate the Special Rapporteur's views on how UN-Women could help consolidate progress towards equality and prevent further backsliding.

101. **Ms. Bertemes** (Luxembourg), speaking as a youth delegate, said that not only were girls and women largely overlooked in climate-related government policies; they also received inadequate education on climate issues and scant opportunity to participate in climate-related decisions that affected them. Noting the need to strengthen education on sexual consent, she asked for examples of effective existing mechanisms for educating women about abuses and how to prevent them. She also asked how support structures could be improved for women abused during climate-driven displacements.

102. **Mr. Varem** (Estonia), speaking on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden), said that they strongly condemned all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. He asked to what extent States acknowledged the role of gender in tackling climate change and what could be done to ensure that multidimensional impacts of climate change were covered more effectively.

103. **Ms. Košir** (Slovenia) said that that women and girls should be placed at the centre of climate change

mitigation and adaptation policies. She asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on how different stakeholders could strengthen understanding of the nexus between violence against women, conflict and climate change.

104. **Mr. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that, in 2019, his country had launched a public-private partnership to bolster the financial-sector response to modern slavery and human trafficking. He asked how the risk of trafficking in women and girls in the context of climate change could be more efficiently reduced and what role civil society and private actors could play.

105. **Ms. Raban** (United Kingdom) said that her country would host a conference on preventing sexual violence in conflict in November 2022. Women's rights organizations played a central role in providing essential special support services for women in times of conflict and crisis. By building gender equality and gender-based violence prevention into climate resilience work and working with women's rights organizations, violence against women could be reduced. She asked how the needs and voices of the most marginalized women and girls could be addressed in violence prevention.

106. **Ms. Tudor-Bezies** (Canada) said that her country was funding projects to ensure that climate-related planning, policymaking and financing addressed the needs and challenges of all women and girls and to promote employment and business opportunities for women working in the climate, energy and resource sectors. It supported women environmental human rights defenders around the world. She asked the Special Rapporteur to share best practices for ensuring that efforts to address climate change were gender-responsive and accounted for the diverse needs of women and girls.

107. **Mr. Al-Khazraji** (Iraq) said that his delegation had reservations regarding terms contained in the report that were not internationally agreed and stressed the need for reports to focus on the assigned subjects in order to preserve the universality of mandate-holders.

108. The economic effects of climate change on Iraq were very clear, as the country faced a grave challenge related to low river levels, which had led to desertification, a decrease in cultivable land and rising levels of poverty and internal displacement in the countryside. He asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate further on the adverse effects of climate change on female-headed households in particular.

109. **Mr. Rashid** (Pakistan) said that his delegation welcomed the Special Rapporteur's recommendation on

strengthening understanding of the nexus between violence against women, conflict and climate change. He wished to know how technical support on policies and programmes to address climate change and its effects on women and girls could be provided with full respect for State sovereignty and national ownership. He also wondered if she planned to report on violence against women in territories under foreign occupation such as Kashmir and Palestine.

110. **Mr. Sharma** (India) said that women continued to bear the brunt of environmental degradation and climate change, particularly in the developing world. His country's more than 1.3 million woman elected representatives took a leadership role in policymaking, including with respect to climate action. To address climate change, mindless, destructive consumption must be replaced by mindful and sustainable use.

111. Speaking in exercise of the right of reply, he said that his delegation rejected and condemned the malicious reference by the representative of Pakistan to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan should put a stop to cross-border terrorism so that Indian citizens could enjoy their right to life and liberty.

112. **Ms. Soares Leite** (Brazil) said that while her delegation shared the views expressed by the Special Rapporteur in her report, it was essential not to lose sight of the root causes of violence against women. She would value the Special Rapporteur's views on the most effective ways to create job opportunities for women and build more resilient and sustainable economies.

113. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that her delegation welcomed the recommendations contained in the report, which called on all stakeholders to strengthen understanding of the nexus between violence against women and climate change by examining the women and peace and security agenda and related national action plans. She asked if the Special Rapporteur could suggest ways in which cooperation could help to implement those recommendations.

114. **Ms. Carlé** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the European Union welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution [76/300](#) on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Like the representative of Slovenia, she would appreciate information on how different stakeholders could strengthen understanding of the nexus between violence against women, conflict and climate change.

115. **Ms. Ostoni** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that the Order was actively engaged in the fight against human trafficking. It had recently proposed

the first-ever human trafficking protocol for global healthcare providers, and in 2019 it had organized a conference on combatting the sexual trafficking of women in West Africa. In Serbia, it supported a shelter for young victims of violence.

116. **Ms. Alsalem** (Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences) said that available data and anecdotal evidence showed a clear nexus between violence against women and climate change, but the data was too thin and unsystematic to reveal more than the tip of the iceberg. The international community had a shared responsibility to improve data collection.

117. Regarding the objection raised by Russia, it was absolutely essential that women and girls should play a central role in climate change-related matters; they represented 50 per cent of the population. Moreover, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development clearly stated that gender inequality and violence against women were barriers to prosperity, and it was a fundamental principle of human rights that no one should be discriminated against on any grounds, including sex, gender identity or sexual orientation.

118. To achieve maximum effect with limited resources, gender-responsive climate action should be mainstreamed much more deliberately. Regarding the creation of safe digital spaces, her predecessor had addressed that issue in her report on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective (A/HRC/38/47). She herself was participating in discussions with the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology in connection with the development of the global digital compact and hoped to present suggestions for addressing violence against women in the digital sphere.

119. With respect to coordination and alignment among United Nations human rights mechanisms, the mandate-holders were committed to working with each other and very much aware of intersectionalities, including with climate change. Unfortunately, in recent documents adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, language encouraging coordination between the Commission and other human rights mechanisms had been watered down. It was essential for States to continue to emphasize cross-pollination among all United Nations human rights mechanisms. She was very concerned about backlash against the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. States that had ratified human rights conventions should defend them actively.

120. An estimated 80 per cent of those displaced for climate-related reasons were women and girls. To

reduce the risk of human trafficking, States should increase access to regular migration pathways, issue humanitarian visas, expand resettlement opportunities, respect the principle of non-refoulement and ensure effective access to international protection.

121. She had addressed the question of violence against women in situations of occupation, specifically in the case of the occupied Palestinian territory. Regarding reasons for the surge in violence against women, such violence was encouraged by impunity, misogynistic attitudes, victim blaming and a lack of prevention and reporting mechanisms. However, given the absence of good data, it was difficult to tell whether the surge was real. That was why the Special Rapporteur had repeatedly called for improving the data on gender-based violence, including by establishing femicide observatories.

122. In a whole-of-society approach, addressing the intersection of violence against women and the climate crisis was a shared responsibility. For that reason, she had tried to stress the importance of a multisectoral response in her report. With regard to access to legal services, the first priority with respect to land was to ensure that inheritance laws protected women.

123. National climate adaptation plans generally referenced gender equality, but States were not reporting on their obligations in sufficient detail. She encouraged all States to collect data on each form of violence against women, make a deliberate effort to address all of them and identify linkages with other issues.

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

125. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the mainstreaming of gender throughout development efforts and the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life were critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. While progress had been made in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, serious challenges and gaps persisted at all levels and in every country, and many promises and commitments remained unfulfilled.

126. Violence against women and girls continued to be a major obstacle to the achievement of gender-related goals. All forms of gender-based violence, and in particular femicide, needed to be prevented and eliminated, and vulnerable groups must be protected from multiple and aggravated forms of discrimination, for which purpose disaggregated data would be needed. Women and girls living in countries affected by armed

conflict, under colonial administration or foreign occupation, or subject to unilateral coercive measures suffered discrimination and violence and lacked access to basic health care, education and social protection, in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

127. An environment of world peace, where disputes were settled peacefully, and democracy and human rights were protected and promoted, was important for the advancement of women. All States had the obligation to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, in accordance with their pledge to leave no one behind.

128. It was essential to remove persistent barriers preventing women's access to the resources that they needed to fully exercise their human rights, including equal access to full and productive employment and decent work. Adequate resources must be allocated for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in the workplace. That would require stronger international cooperation and intensified global dialogue to ensure that a gender perspective was incorporated into all policies and measures related to women's advancement and empowerment. North-South and South-South cooperation must be intensified in order to address the challenges faced by women and girls and enhance their role as full and equal partners in the development of their societies.

129. The Commission on the Status of Women should continue to serve as the one of the main forums for addressing, promoting and reviewing issues related to the advancement and empowerment of women and for following progress on the Sustainable Development Goals within its mandate.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.