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### Third Committee

#### Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 29 September 2022, at 3 p.m.

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

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

**Agenda item 25: Social development (continued)**

- (a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (continued) (A/77/175)**
- (b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family (continued) (A/77/61–E/2022/4, A/77/134 and A/77/166)**
- (c) Literacy for life: shaping future agendas (continued) (A/77/187)**

1. **Mr. Lagdameo** (Philippines) said that AmBisyon Natin 2040, his country's long-term development vision for 2040, and the complementary mid-term development plan for 2017–2022 were guided by people's rights and well-being. Although the Philippines was making steady progress in enhancing its social fabric, reducing inequality and increasing growth potential, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic threatened to undo years of progress. His country's development plan was updated in 2021 to take into account the new challenges posed by the pandemic, without compromising on its goal to lay the foundation for inclusive growth and a resilient society.

2. COVID-19 had proved that strong social development programmes could help societies to withstand challenges. One example was his country's conditional cash transfer programme, launched in 2008 and enacted into law in 2019, aimed at reducing the vulnerability of children living in poverty, among other goals. As societies recovered following the recent unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, children, youth, women, migrants, Indigenous peoples, older persons and persons with disabilities must not be left behind. His country's updated development plan took into account the specific needs of those groups, while recognizing the important contributions they could make towards sustainable development.

3. **Ms. Kinyungu** (Kenya) said that her Government was committed to safeguarding the social development of all Kenyans and addressing the welfare of vulnerable and marginalized groups and communities. Kenya Vision 2030, the country's long-term development blueprint, was aimed at building a just and cohesive society where all persons could enjoy equitable social development through flagship projects in the areas of social protection, education and training, health-care services, housing and urbanization, food security, labour

and employment, financial inclusion and science, technology and innovation. Social development initiatives, such as a national safety net programme, a hunger safety net programme and the Inua Jamii cash transfer programme, provided support to vulnerable groups. Other strategies and systems, including the Women Enterprise Fund, the Youth Enterprise Fund, the COVID-19 Social Economic Re-engineering Recovery Strategy and the new Hustler Fund for micro, small and medium-sized companies, were aimed at improving livelihoods for vulnerable populations and encouraging inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19. In addition, digital technology had been made widely available during the pandemic, thereby strengthening the country's efficiency and productivity, enhancing blended teaching and learning and ensuring financial inclusion through mobile money systems.

4. Kenya had put in place measures to promote and protect the human rights and dignity of women, youth, children, persons with disabilities and older persons. Education was a key priority for her Government, which was committed to enhancing the acquisition of foundational skills through curriculum reforms. Kenya was honoured to be a member of the advisory committee of the recently concluded Transforming Education Summit.

5. Despite positive developments, challenges and gaps remained. Developing countries, heavily burdened by external debt servicing, ran the risk of losing development gains as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated disruptions. Her delegation proposed building partnerships and confidence-building measures to foster sustainable and inclusive development, ensuring that development financing prioritized just transitions and adaptation to climate change, especially for developing countries, and empowering women and girls, integrating them in all spheres of development and ensuring that they remained at the centre of social development efforts and policies.

6. **Ms. Moussane** (Netherlands), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, in her role as a United Nations youth representative for human rights and security, she had had the opportunity to speak with Leyla, Nick and Inez, three young people who had revealed some of the gaps in her country's education system, mental health system and digital environment. Leyla had suffered as a child and young adult from discrimination and bias in the education and health systems on the basis of her gender and socioeconomic and cultural background. After waiting almost one year to access mental health care, 15-year-old Nick had been placed in a mental health-care facility that had failed to provide him with an education that matched his capabilities and needs. Nick

had taught her that her country's mental health-care system was lacking a system-wide approach to the mental-health crisis faced by her generation. At 16, Inez had experienced cyberbullying and online sexual harassment, which meant that her country was not providing adequate tools to enable young people to deal with the negative side of the Internet and social media.

7. Intergenerational cooperation and knowledge-sharing were needed to ensure that young people were the last generation forced to deal with such gaps; they needed to be part of the solution. Given that policies were not always future-proof, future generations were not always taken into consideration and policies did not affect each generation equally, a United Nations generational test had been created by youth delegates to measure the impact of United Nations policies on current and future generations prior to implementation. States were urged to participate in the development of the generational test and to consider young people as an equal partner in negotiations and policy-making.

8. **Ms. Pereira Portilla** (Colombia) said that conflict and climate change were having a very negative impact on poverty rates, slowing the implementation of social development commitments worldwide. Social development required progress that prioritized combating climate change, given the harmful effects of economies on nature, and adopting strategies to promote peace and collective well-being. Colombia was strongly committed to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. States must work to ensure that crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, did not deepen social inequalities, particularly in rural areas. Policies were needed to target the specific needs of disadvantaged communities and reactivate social programmes and services that had been suspended during the pandemic. A sustainable recovery must put women, children, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, rural communities and Indigenous peoples at the centre of efforts to combat extreme poverty.

9. Strategies were also needed to prevent intersectional discrimination. In that regard, her country was establishing care models for the most vulnerable groups, had recently signed the instrument of accession to the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons and supported the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing. In order to guarantee the full enjoyment of women's rights and support diverse family configurations, her country had formalized its withdrawal from the Geneva Consensus Declaration on Promoting Women's Health and Strengthening the Family.

10. Her Government was working to enable young people to access free, universal, public education and to ensure political participation. Colombia considered it essential to approach learning from a multicultural perspective, including by offering literacy and other educational programmes in Indigenous languages and focusing on Indigenous knowledge to promote linguistic and cultural diversity.

11. **Ms. Iileka** (Namibia) said that her delegation supported the continued work of the Secretary-General in ensuring the implementation of the recommendations contained in his report entitled "Our Common Agenda" and its focus on reinvigorating multilateralism to tackle the interconnected challenges of the twenty-first century. It also welcomed the establishment of a dedicated United Nations Youth Office and commended the Secretary General for his proposal to meet at the Summit of the Future to reflect on the upcoming challenges and opportunities of current and future generations. The Summit should be convened at the earliest opportune time.

12. Her Government allocated a large portion of its national budget to education, recognizing its importance in creating a prosperous industrialized nation by 2030. Namibia had consistently prioritized the sector through policy development and the allocation of human and financial resources. In line with the recently concluded Transforming Education Summit, Namibia was committed to transformative leadership, ensuring access to inclusive digital technologies and developing a strategy for innovative financing and resource mobilization.

13. Since its independence in 1990, Namibia had achieved notable progress in reducing poverty, halving the proportion of Namibians living below the national poverty line. However, deep underlying challenges remained. The pre-1990 history of systematic exclusion of the black majority from full participation in economic activities continued to shape society and the economy, constraining the country's economic and social progress. In that regard, Namibia remained acutely aware of the vulnerabilities facing developing countries. Its classification as an upper-middle income country posed challenges in terms of mobilizing resources to finance its development goals. Dividing the country's gross domestic product by its small population, which derived a high per capita income, was a flawed formula that required urgent consideration, given that it failed to take into account the vast income disparities between the wealthy white and poor black populations, a consequence of 100 years of colonialism and apartheid occupation.

14. Like many developing countries, Namibia remained vulnerable to the asymmetrical impacts of climate change. Severe drought conditions constrained agricultural output, leading to a sharp decline in harvests, which compounded structural food deficits, and to a heavier reliance on food imports, which were susceptible to price fluctuations. States needed to act decisively to reduce carbon emissions and preserve the planet and its people. A just energy transition required fair opportunities for developing nations to sustainably access the natural endowments at their disposal.

15. **Ms. Alvarado** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the world was facing significant economic, social and environmental crises, including as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which were exacerbated by the geopolitical environment; progress, development and prosperity for all were required to overcome them. It was also necessary to guarantee access to economic and social rights, taking into account the principles of universality, interdependence, indivisibility and progressiveness of human rights. Mexico had established social protection programmes aimed at combating inequalities and correcting discriminatory practices.

16. The protection of young people was a priority for Mexico. Strengthening their leadership, agency and participation in all their diversity was needed to ensure they fully developed their potential. Through the “Voluntad Joven” initiative, 30,000 young people were supporting educational activities and the national literacy movement. With regard to older persons, a total of 16.8 per cent of the Mexican population would be over the age of 60 by 2050. Her Government continued to provide direct pension support to older persons, guaranteeing support at the constitutional level and prioritizing older persons with disabilities. Families played a central role in strengthening social cohesion and ensuring personal and educational development. Her country recognized families in all their diversity.

17. Her delegation reaffirmed its commitment to social development, both for the good of all individuals and societies and for the proper functioning of multilateralism, and recognized the symbiotic relationship between development and human rights.

18. **Mr. Sharma** (India) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had had a severe impact on collective efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. In a globalized world, in which the consequences of crises in distant regions were felt by all, States needed to work collectively to build back better and sustain socioeconomic progress. In that context, the 2030 Agenda had been integrated into national and local

governance systems and individual households in India, as a result of which 331 million more people had access to improved sanitation, 233 million more people had access to clean cooking fuel, electricity coverage had improved from 88 to 97 per cent, over 500 million people had health coverage and the under-5 mortality rate had declined by 16 per cent.

19. Under his country’s social development agenda, digital technologies had been deployed to improve service delivery of government programmes. One example was Aadhaar, a biometric-based unique identification system covering more than 95 per cent of the country’s population, which facilitated access to social protection services. In addition, more than 460 million people, over 55 per cent of them women, had bank accounts opened through the Government’s financial inclusion initiative, and 200 million women had been able to access benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other developments included the world’s largest affordable housing programme for the poor; a public distribution system to provide free dry rations to 800 million people; a rural employment guarantee scheme; a plan to provide tap water to every rural household by 2024; and an initiative to issue 94 million free cooking gas connections to protect women and children from indoor air pollution.

20. His country’s national education policy for 2020 was based on four pillars (access, equity, quality and accountability) and had a road map for building a strong foundation for innovation. The number of start-ups in India, one of the largest start-up ecosystems in the world, had risen from 471 in 2016 to 72,993 in June 2022. In addition, India was stepping up development partnerships with fellow developing countries through South-South cooperation, including through the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund.

21. **Ms. Fadlon** (Israel), speaking as a youth delegate, said that social development could not be promoted without addressing the climate crisis. She had recently worked in partnership with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to host a hackathon on sustainability, which had inspired over 300 students to explore climate change solutions and ways to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, Israel had appointed a Special Envoy for Climate Change and was promoting multilateral solutions to addressing that global phenomenon. The Ministries of Finance and Agriculture, together with the Inter-American Development Bank, had launched a grant programme through which agricultural technology companies assisted countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in facing challenges related to climate change.

22. Her country's social development policy was aimed at addressing various needs. According to the Commission for Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities, there were 427 organizations in Israel dedicated to assisting persons with disabilities, who accounted for roughly 20 per cent of the population. Those organizations were providing services in a variety of areas, including music, sport and education. To ensure equal opportunities for older persons, a national plan had also been launched, under which over \$30 million had been invested in senior housing, mental health and employment services.

23. Quality education, with a focus on education for democracy, was a priority for her country, as demonstrated by the establishment of a President's award to promote education through partnerships and an education policy plan implemented by the Israel Democracy Institute. Schools of religious and ethnic Israeli minorities offered instruction in students' native languages and were fully funded by the Government; Arab Christian schools were ranked among the top academic institutions in Israel. Civil society organizations, such as GoEco, enabled thousands of volunteers to offer their skills, including to promote literacy in underprivileged countries.

24. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that her delegation welcomed the special focus on the nexus between digital technologies and the family in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes (A/77/61). Family, the basic unit of society, was essential for a country's cohesion and the well-being of each of its members, in particular of children, who needed a father and a mother for their emotional and psychosocial development. The family faced many challenges. In addition to those listed in the Cairo Plan of Action, the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented development of information and communications technology had posed new ones, including those related to dangerous or inappropriate content, online exploitation and Internet addiction. Parents were often the first barrier to cybercrime involving children. How then could the increasing attempts to dilute the role of parents and the family be justified? Why attempt to remove healthy and useful parental control that could protect children from the risks associated with information and communications technology under the pretext that children's right to privacy should be respected and their autonomy promoted?

25. The Convention on the Rights of the Child stated that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being

of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community. Cameroon had understood that well, and so its laws protected both the traditional family as an institution and individual family members.

26. Social development was critical for the Sustainable Development Goals, and family was critical to social development. The thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024 offered an opportunity to reinforce the protection of the traditional family through policies that reaffirmed parents' authority over their minor children. States should reflect on the nexus between social development, information and communications technology and the family. In addition, more work was needed to reduce the digital divide among countries and improve families' access to the Internet and digital devices with a view to harnessing the full potential of information and communications technology for the promotion and protection of the family.

27. **Ms. Flores Tello** (Panama) said that social development and combating poverty and inequality were central themes in the national agenda of Panama, a country committed to promoting comprehensive social policies to ensure the development and well-being of its population. Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a process of transformation had been under way requiring innovation and the application of new ways of interacting, working, learning and coexisting. The focus in her country had been on recovery and sustainable growth for the benefit of the most vulnerable groups.

28. The Beehive Initiative, a State policy for comprehensive, economic and sustainable development, had laid the foundation for combating poverty and inequality. Under the initiative, over 300 districts with a high multidimensional poverty index had benefited from actions in areas including nutrition, water, education, housing, income-generating activities, sports, culture, environmental conservation and infrastructure. The Panama Solidarity Plan, a money transfer programme, had been recognized by the Inter-American Development Bank, the Organization of American States, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for its work in reducing extreme poverty despite the pandemic.

29. Her Government recognized the fundamental role of young people and welcomed the creation of the new United Nations Youth Office. In that context, a new youth policy had been established in her country,

following a consultation process with more than 2,800 young people, whose proposals were subsequently analysed by the United Nations Development Programme. Panama was committed to guaranteeing the full exercise of the rights of young people, as well as their direct participation in the decisions that affected them.

30. Her country had taken important steps towards full social inclusion, enacting initiatives to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in all areas of life, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Panama was also working towards becoming a country free of illiteracy, a socioeconomic and cultural phenomenon in Indigenous and rural areas by which women were the most widely affected. Under the “Muévete por Panamá” programme, more than 79,000 Panamanians had become literate, 3,506 in the previous 36 months; 50 per cent of them were women.

31. **Mr. Ly** (Finland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that his parents had fled their native Viet Nam at the age of 22, and it was an honour for him to represent their story and legacy as refugees. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over 89 million people worldwide had been forced to flee their homes, including 27 million refugees, around half under the age of 18, and there were over 4 million asylum-seekers. The world was facing the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War as a result of the failed preservation of peace and security. The aggression of Russia towards Ukraine and conflicts in Afghanistan and Palestine were examples of how world peace and security was being threatened.

32. Rather than working together to find the necessary solutions to help refugees and asylum-seekers, States were arguing about who should be responsible for taking action. Discussions around refugees and asylum-seekers had polarized nations, leading to an increase in racist and xenophobic speech and violence towards minorities. Moreover, their number was rising as a result of conflicts. Related processing times were often long, leaving young refugees and asylum-seekers in a situation of uncertainty, thereby putting them at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking and exploitation. Families were often being separated, and the forced return of asylum-seekers had led to situations that put human lives at risk.

33. The insufficient access to basic human rights extended to education and work, with only 6 per cent of refugees gaining access to higher education. In many countries, people were suffering discrimination in accessing employment or education, and intersectional

discrimination had a long-term impact on young refugees and asylum-seekers. It was necessary to establish humane policies, shorten processing times and understand that refugees and asylum-seekers were a diverse group of people. A better understanding of the barriers they faced in accessing employment was required, as were targeted policies and programmes to address those issues. Laws and global agreements were needed to protect refugees and asylum-seekers from all forms of violence, including by criminalizing racist hate speech. Finland was one of the 21 countries that was resettling refugees through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and he encouraged other countries to join those efforts.

34. **Mr. Giles** (Ireland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that although protection against climate change had often been seen as being in conflict with development goals, the 2030 Agenda offered a path forward, underlining the needs of a world that was rife with inequality, poverty and injustice. Multilateral partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals were more important than ever for a more equal, stable and just world for all. States must work towards creating inclusive societies, equipped with the mechanisms and systems to accommodate and celebrate diversity and ensure active and meaningful participation. Social development must ensure equal opportunities and empower underrepresented groups, including persons with disabilities and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex plus (LGBTI+) community, to be present at decision-making tables.

35. In accordance with the principle set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child to guarantee the right of children to be heard in international law, Ireland had established a national framework for children's and young people's participation in decision-making.

36. **Ms. Gill** (Ireland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that gender equality was needed to protect human rights and achieve social development. Her country's enduring commitment to the empowerment of women and girls was reflected in its national and foreign policy, including in the National Strategy for Women and Girls, aimed at advancing socioeconomic equality, embedding gender equality into decision-making and combating violence against women, and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Ireland was also committed to addressing the recommendations of the report of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality.

37. Food insecurity and malnutrition continued to disproportionately affect women and girls worldwide. In that context, her country had recently announced a

pledge to the United Nations Children's Fund of an additional \$50 million over three years with the aim of accelerating the global response to the early detection, prevention and treatment of child malnutrition. States were urged to take similar action to break cycles of poverty and promote sustainable development through investments in low-income countries. Young people were suffering the long-term consequences of the pandemic, including in terms of interrupted career paths, and young women were disproportionately affected, widening existing inequalities. Through investment in digital education and training capacity, Member States could enhance people's resilience to future crises, including those related to climate change.

38. **Mr. Milambo** (Zambia) said that conflict, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic had had a negative impact on social development in Zambia, increasing poverty among vulnerable groups, including older persons, persons with disabilities, women, children and youth, as well as demand for social services. The pandemic had led to loss of lives and livelihoods, especially among low-skilled workers and those working in tourism and the vast informal sector, and there had been a notable increase in gender-based violence against women and girls. The comprehensive response of the Government of Zambia included emergency cash transfers for people working in the informal sector and for households with children with special needs. The transfers were designed to ensure continuity in household income levels, improve food security, reduce poverty and eradicate hunger, with a focus on vulnerable persons. The caseload had nearly doubled between 2019 and 2022, with almost 70 per cent of the extreme poor set to receive financial support by the end of 2022; persons with disabilities received double the transfer value.

39. To promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, his Government had developed a disability management information system to compile information on persons with disabilities and streamline disability services. The Government had also established a quota system to ensure that at least 10 per cent of all programmes were reserved for persons with disabilities. With regard to young people, the Government recognized the importance of youth involvement at all stages of development through youth organizations, cooperatives and youth empowerment programmes.

40. **Ms. Espinoza Madrid** (Honduras) said that social development was particularly important for her country, which had suffered from 13 years of dictatorship, electoral frauds, a pandemic and multiple natural disasters. Her country's population of 9.6 million comprised 51.3 per cent women and 8.6 per cent

Indigenous peoples and persons of African descent. Six per cent of the population was over the age of 65 and adolescents and youth accounted for 29.8 per cent. Thirteen years of dictatorship protected by the international community had led her country to see its public debt increase sixfold and the poverty rate to go up to 74 per cent, the highest in the country's history. Four out of ten Hondurans lived in extreme poverty, mostly in rural areas. For her country to survive, it must reject austerity, which would lead to a considerable increase in inequality.

41. Her country, under its current President, was being built under a humanist vision, imbued with dignity and sovereignty, working in solidarity with other countries to achieve respect for human rights and the common good. The current arbitrary world order was unacceptable; countries that considered themselves to be civilized were carrying out invasions, waging wars and engaging in financial speculation, causing inflation that led to so much suffering in other countries. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, her Government was working to reduce poverty, including through a solidarity network programme, policies to improve nutrition, a law on energy as a public good and the promotion of workers' rights. Sustainable development could only be achieved through an alternative economic model that was sovereign and humanist in nature, along with high-impact strategies benefiting the most vulnerable groups.

42. **Mr. Romero Puentes** (Cuba) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the evils of the current unjust international order. The exclusion of the South and the difficulties faced by many developing countries in their post-pandemic recovery were threatening the limited gains made in social development. The international community must step up cooperation, resource and technology transfer and solidarity with the South if it wished to achieve the 2030 Agenda goals of eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, promoting productive employment and decent work and building more inclusive societies. If wealth was not distributed equally and if unilateral coercive measures were applied against the South, there would be no social development.

43. The commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995 were still in force, as were the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, and the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. His delegation supported the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing and the newly created United Nations Youth Office. The protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, older persons, youth and families remained a priority for



Cuba. The country's 2019 Constitution further strengthened the rights of those persons and the responsibility of the State with respect to those groups. Population ageing was among the leading sociodemographic challenges, with life expectancy in Cuba at 78.45 years, and it was estimated that by 2035, 32.5 per cent of the population would be over the age of 60. Comprehensive care programmes for persons with disabilities, children and youth were also being improved to ensure that they had the conditions needed to develop their full potential. A new Family Code, ratified following a referendum, recognized and protected all types of families, including same-sex unions, contributed to combating all forms of discrimination and violence, promoted gender equality and strengthened the protection of children and the rights of persons with disabilities and older persons.

44. To achieve positive results for the well-being of its people, Cuba had had to overcome serious obstacles created by the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States for more than six decades. That policy of hostility, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, was the main obstacle to development and directly affected the enjoyment of human rights and the quality of life of the Cuban people, particularly older persons, persons with disabilities, women and children. However, as demonstrated time and again, most recently in the popular referendum on the Family Code, nothing would stop them from building a just and inclusive society for all people, along the path they had freely chosen.

45. **Archbishop Caccia** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the social dimension of development, which was at the core of what was required for person-centred integral development, required States to look beyond national averages and statistics to ensure that everyone could thrive. That vision for human flourishing was grounded in the intrinsic worth of each person regardless of their background, need or origin, for which it was essential to ensure the integral human development of every person, at every age and stage of life. A holistic approach to social development could not take place without appropriate and timely measures to eradicate poverty. Basic subsistence remained a daily struggle for far too many people, a situation worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and further exacerbated by conflicts, unemployment, inflation and rising food insecurity. States must work to alleviate the multidimensional effects of poverty, including through strong social protection systems, and address its root causes.

46. Social protection programmes, which could help to alleviate poverty by addressing the factors perpetuating it, should be responsive to local

communities and tailored to meet their needs. In that regard, it was important to recall that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the family was the natural and fundamental unit of society and was entitled to protection by society and the State. The family provided the best environment for children's development, with mothers and fathers offering unique and irreplaceable contributions. The family was also the first, and sometimes only, support for those in vulnerable situations, especially persons with disabilities and older persons. Social protection programmes should assist families in their role in caring for the weakest, not supplant them.

47. Education was the primary vehicle of integral human development, given that it made individuals free and responsible. Quality education must therefore be available to all without distinction. However, the recent disruptions to education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in developing countries, where students lacked access to the digital technologies required to continue their education, were a matter of deep concern. Poor children, children with disabilities and migrant and refugee children experienced the greatest challenges. The international community must invest in skills training and education programmes, with a focus on achieving universal literacy and numeracy. Although every person should have the opportunity to contribute to society through work, many young people were struggling to find a job after finishing their education. Young people needed to have employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, and the specific challenges faced by older persons and persons with disabilities in the workplace should be addressed.

48. **Ms. Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her delegation took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/77/175), in particular the emphasis on the importance of multilateralism and the fact that international cooperation and solidarity based on joint responsibility and mutual trust were essential to ensure an equitable and resilient recovery. Notwithstanding the different contexts and levels of development, the COVID-19 pandemic had significantly challenged the ability of countries to provide basic and quality services, including in the fields of health, education, employment and social protection. Its disproportionate impact on developing countries was evident and indisputable. Global solidarity and multilateral cooperation must be strengthened in order to overcome inequalities among and within countries to accelerate recovery from the pandemic and the negative impact of socioeconomic crises.



49. The Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, in her report ([A/HRC/51/33/Add.1](#)) on her visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran, delivered to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-first session, highlighted that the economic sanctions had undermined national efforts towards economic self-sufficiency as a response to the sanctions-induced socioeconomic pressures, and had led to growing poverty, exacerbated socioeconomic inequalities and insufficient resources aimed at guaranteeing the basic needs of low-income people and other vulnerable peoples, including people suffering from rare or severe diseases, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants and refugees, women-led households and children.

50. Despite the imposition of economic sanctions by the United States, which disregarded multilateralism and challenged the rules-based international order, Iran had taken several effective measures to reduce the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures, while addressing the pandemic and post-pandemic situation, including the increased demand for health, education and social protection. Her Government had instituted comprehensive packages that included cash transfer measures, targeted interventions to support small businesses and entrepreneurs, expansion of social protections and provisions for debt relief and interest-free loans for vulnerable businesses and households.

51. Her delegation underlined the positive contributions of young people to the future of societies and emphasized the need to empower youth, including by considering their needs, priorities and challenges. Strategies must be implemented at all levels to eradicate poverty and hunger while taking into consideration the resilience of society and the family. It reiterated its support for the essential work of the Commission for Social Development. The United Nations system must address the social development challenges and needs faced by developing countries, particularly those resulting from the pandemic. To facilitate and accelerate responses to the socioeconomic crisis, while enhancing people's well-being and combating inequality, States must insist on multilateralism and condemn unilateral coercive measures.

52. **Mr. Aidid** (Malaysia) said that the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and climate change had rolled back progress made by countries in various areas, including social development. As a result, inequalities had been widened, subjecting many individuals and families to poverty and hunger. Malaysia had not been spared. To mitigate those effects, his Government had launched a plan for the period 2021–2025 with the theme “A prosperous, inclusive, sustainable Malaysia”, aimed at

the eradication of extreme poverty and the empowerment of groups, including women, young people, older persons, Indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. By empowering women, Malaysia aimed to boost the female labour force participation rate from 55.6 per cent to 59 per cent by 2025, increase economic participation and enhance the role of women in decision-making bodies.

53. Malaysia was introducing a new national plan on youth economic empowerment aimed at improving youth employability through training and skills upgrading. It was also working to enact laws to protect the rights of older persons, establish a comprehensive care framework, enhance caregiving services and create more elderly-friendly cities.

54. To ensure the meaningful participation of its Indigenous population, the Orang Asli, in socioeconomic development, a comprehensive development programme was being developed with a focus on education. Dedicated employment and entrepreneurship programmes were also being launched to continue empowering persons with disabilities, including by improving accessibility and strengthening insurance protection coverage.

55. **Ms. Sanabud** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people were grateful for the strong commitments made by leaders around the world during the high-level week of the current session of the General Assembly to embrace the transformative creativity and energy of young people and a culture of volunteerism, and would do their part to help to make those pledges a reality. The adoption by consensus of General Assembly resolution [76/306](#) on the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office was testament to the urgency of promoting the meaningful engagement of young people across the work of the United Nations.

56. Education was a right. Without equal and high-quality education, young people faced considerable barriers to employment later in life, and their ability to shape a better future for themselves and their societies was threatened. Innovation in education was needed through new standards and the employment of technologies in the classroom. Schools lacking basic digital technologies and hardware should be given particular attention and the necessary assistance.

57. **Ms. Viriyapongsri** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people welcomed the adoption of the Youth Declaration on Transforming Education at the Transforming Education Summit and were particularly motivated by the demand for investment in education for sustainable development

across curricula, in particular climate education. Governments must continue to involve young people in tackling climate change and make full use of their creative ideas and solutions to create a more climate-resilient society. The Thai Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment had recently launched an initiative to invite young people to tackle environmental issues through innovative science and technology-based solutions.

58. Young people should be given the opportunity to contribute as equal partners to determine their shared future both at the national level and at the United Nations. Their voices should be taken into account at future United Nations meetings, such as the Summit of the Future in 2024.

59. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that the approach taken by her Government to development was based on the protection and promotion of human rights for all without discrimination. It had adopted many laws and executive measures that had contributed to tangible results in all areas of social development, with a view to achieving its Vision 2030.

60. Her country was looking forward to hosting the fourth Global Disability Summit in cooperation with the International Disability Alliance in 2028. Qatar was ready to welcome football fans to the 2022 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup, which would be the most accessible tournament ever for persons with disabilities.

61. Young people were at the centre of development policies and they were taken into consideration in the international development and humanitarian aid programmes that it was implementing in many countries. Over the past decade, about \$980 million of support had been provided through the Qatar Fund for Development, benefiting millions of young people and children in 65 countries.

62. Qatar had played a leading role in the preparations for the Transforming Education Summit, held in September 2022, by convening both national consultations and preparatory consultations for the Arab region and Western Asia. The Summit had included the launches of an initiative on localizing education for a sustainable future by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and an initiative on innovative financing mechanisms for education by the Education Above All Foundation, in cooperation with the World Bank, the Global Partnership for Education and Sierra Leone.

63. It was important to adopt family-oriented social and economic policies, given the important contribution

of the family to the achievement of comprehensive and sustainable social development. Qatar looked forward to hosting the international conference to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024.

64. **Mr. Malovrh** (Slovenia) said that, in response to the demographic challenges facing Slovenia, his Government had adopted a strategy based on the concept of active and healthy ageing and had established a council for active ageing and intergenerational cooperation, which was responsible for the implementation of the strategy. Active ageing was promoted through the Third Age University of Slovenia, a voluntary movement that aimed to provide access to education and culture to older persons. His Government had initiated the establishment of and was co-financing multigenerational centres intended to promote social inclusion and prevent social exclusion.

65. Slovenia welcomed the important work of United Nations human rights mechanisms, in particular the treaty bodies that had endeavoured to address issues affecting older persons. However, a number of issues relevant to older persons did not receive appropriate coverage. There was a clear need to improve the implementation of existing norms and standards, and to upgrade the relevant international legal framework. Strengthening the protection and promotion of the human rights of older persons must be part of efforts to build back as a more equal and age-friendly society.

66. **Mr. Ciglaric** (Slovenia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that his country was facing a severe decline in the participation of young people in volunteer work, causing volunteer organizations to cease their activities. The readiness of young people to take an active role in politics and activism had reached its lowest point in decades. Fear of discrimination, the lack of mentoring programmes and negative public opinion about the participation of young people in those areas were preventing them from raising their voices. The recent measures taken by the United Nations to increase the inclusion of young people were welcome but not enough.

67. **Mr. Portorreal Brandao** (Dominican Republic) said that the 2030 Agenda played an important role in social protection and economic development as a crucial tool for the development of public policies aimed at eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and promoting inclusive development. Effective strategies to eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition and promote social inclusion must continue to be implemented to enable the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the participation of the most disadvantaged people.

68. Young people were positive agents of change in multilateral efforts. Their full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making was therefore essential. With the adoption of the General Assembly resolution on the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office, the commitment to making progress towards a United Nations with and for young people had been strengthened.

69. His Government had adopted economic and social measures and policies to support the most vulnerable people and designed programmes to promote sustainable development. Recognizing that persons with disabilities had the same inherent, universal and inalienable rights to decent health, it had implemented public health policies, without any form of discrimination, that were accessible to persons with disabilities, and had also adopted a plan to ensure that decent housing and home ownership were accessible to them. Solidarity pensions were granted to persons with disabilities, unemployed single mothers and older persons. Various measures were being implemented to ensure the well-being and inclusion of older persons, including the delivery of food rations and supplements to older persons and economic incentives for families with older persons.

70. His Government had implemented policies to respond in an inclusive and resilient manner to the COVID-19 pandemic, while advocating zero hunger. Initiatives to respond to the pandemic in the area of food had become public policies that were being reinforced and expanded.

71. **Mr. Vongnorkeo** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that groups of countries in special situations with limited capacities and resources were struggling to cope with external shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and ensure basic and fundamental rights for all, especially the rights to adequate food and nutrition, clean water and sanitation, adequate housing, and equal access to education and health-care services, had also been hampered. The poverty gap was widening, and multiple challenges had been encountered in achieving inclusive social and economic development.

72. The Lao People's Democratic Republic was facing severe consequences of natural calamities, which had destroyed vast agricultural areas and basic infrastructure such as local roads, making access to schools and health-care dispensaries extremely difficult. Addressing climate change and long-term environmental protection had been top priorities of his Government in its socioeconomic plans. Relevant ministries and provincial authorities had been working closely with

multiple stakeholders to provide emergency relief to affected communities and the most vulnerable people, especially women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

73. His Government was implementing a five-year socioeconomic development plan, a national strategy and a vision, giving priority to inclusive social development and poverty eradication. Transforming the education sector remained a top priority, with an emphasis on improving the human assets index, one of the key thresholds for graduation from the least developed country category. Under the national strategy, the education sector had been reformed extensively with a view to improving national standards and making education accessible for all.

74. **Ms. Le Thoa Thi Minh** (Viet Nam) said that her country supported the central role of the United Nations in spearheading international efforts to address current global challenges and was actively participating in the common goals of the United Nations, especially in the field of social development, while ensuring and promoting human rights.

75. The multiple causes of poverty and inequality could be addressed by creating decent work and other income-generating opportunities and providing high-quality education and lifelong learning. Businesses and employees should be supported with preferential loans to restore, maintain and create jobs, while focusing on the development of high-quality training infrastructure. The social inclusion and participation of disadvantaged people should be facilitated. Legal frameworks and policies should be aimed at reducing poverty and inequalities, enhancing people's capabilities and well-being, and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for all. The international community and development partners should strengthen multinational cooperation, fulfil their official development assistance commitments and explore fair and efficient mechanisms for debt crisis resolution.

76. Her country's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals had resulted in positive outcomes despite many socioeconomic difficulties. Her Government had made great strides in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic, while ensuring social security and health, social and educational rights. Viet Nam was widely recognized as a success story in poverty reduction and was among a group of 30 pioneering countries adopting a multidimensional approach to poverty. Her Government had shown great determination in responding to climate change through the implementation of commitments under the Paris

Agreement on Climate Change and the new commitment to achieve carbon emission neutrality by 2050.

77. With the desire to contribute more effectively to common efforts to protect and promote human rights and social development, Viet Nam was presenting its candidature for membership of the Human Rights Council for the term 2023–2025.

78. **Ms. Makgati** (South Africa) said that her country had experienced negative impacts from the multiple and interlinked global crises in the areas of food, energy and finance. The COVID-19 pandemic had reversed national efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty. Various forms of support had been rolled out by her Government and non-governmental organizations to alleviate the social impact of the pandemic. Social disaster relief funds had been provided under the coordination of the Government and other social service actors.

79. South Africa concurred with the Secretary-General regarding the need to strengthen multilateralism, especially in efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda. It had facilitated the resolution on the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, one of the two resolutions recommended by the Commission for Social Development at its sixtieth session for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.

80. Under her Government's socioeconomic development plan, development targets were set across all sectors, and social protection was identified among 14 key medium-term strategic outcomes. The plan included social grants, free education through no-fee schools, a school nutrition programme and access to basic services such as clean water and electricity, with the aim of lifting the poor out of poverty and decreasing their burden of spending on basic services.

81. South Africa was committed to implementing the recommendation of the Secretary-General to progressively achieve universal access to basic services and social protection through the aforementioned measures and other social services, which accounted for 60 per cent of total government expenditure. The government social protection programme covered more than 18 million of the poorest citizens, including 11.3 million children and more than 4 million older persons.

82. Her Government would continue to invest in the capacities of women and girls while pursuing accelerated actions to close the gender gap and ensure their full and equal access to education, health care and social protection, and access to employment and decent work. South Africa would also raise awareness of how to recover from the pandemic and prepare for future crises at the United Nations and beyond.

83. **Ms. Rodríguez Mancia** (Guatemala) said that a new transformational approach was needed to effectively address the complex and increasingly interrelated problems that had been multiplying in recent years owing to pandemics, inequality and climate change. Social development must be a priority, given that economic development could be achieved only with social and human development.

84. Her Government had given priority to measures to strengthen health services, food and nutrition security, housing, education and science and technology, and to programmes for older persons and persons with disabilities. Particular attention had been given to ending chronic malnutrition in the country through the strengthening of social protection programmes and local production, and the promotion of education on healthy food.

85. Opportunities to ensure the continuity of education in the face of unprecedented challenges must be identified, with a focus on early childhood development. School feeding programmes should be strengthened, given their direct impact on the lives of children and their families. Educational scholarships should be provided to encourage young people to pursue specializations to improve their employment prospects.

86. Challenges in resource mobilization must be addressed to ensure an inclusive, people-centred recovery. Developing countries, including middle-income countries, should be given increased access to financing and technology transfer, which would support progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

87. Young people represented a high percentage of the population of Guatemala. Sufficient and sustained investments must be made to support young people and guarantee their participation in all sectors. The rights of older persons should also be promoted, and the commitment to build a decent life for older persons, without mistreatment or abandonment, must be upheld.

88. **Ms. Baptista Grade Zacarias** (Portugal) said that an inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises must be focused on economic, social and cultural rights. The promotion of the full realization of those rights had been a long-standing priority for her country. All States should ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its Optional Protocol.

89. In 2021, during the Portuguese presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Social Summit had been held in Porto. Her country looked forward to the World Social Summit, announced by the Secretary-

General in his report entitled “Our Common Agenda”, to be held in 2025.

90. Portugal reiterated its strong support for the newly created United Nations Youth Office. Concrete and effective measures must be taken to ensure the meaningful and diverse participation of young people across the United Nations agenda.

91. The COVID-19 pandemic had disproportionately affected older persons, especially in ageing societies such as Portugal. The pandemic had been a wake-up call for both policymakers and human rights experts, who increasingly acknowledged the existence of gaps and limitations in the international normative framework for the protection of the human rights of older persons. Age-based discrimination was a persistent and structural reality that States must combat. Portugal therefore agreed that negotiations should be opened at the United Nations on an internationally binding instrument to protect and promote the human rights of all older persons.

92. **Mr. Esatia** (Georgia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that it had been difficult to think about the future or development in the challenging environment of his hometown of Gali, a conflict-affected area where the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental principles of international law were shamelessly violated and young people were deprived of their basic rights, including the rights to high-quality education and education in their native language.

93. The whole world was witnessing the results of the unprovoked, cruel war of Russia against Ukraine and was reminded of its duty to contribute to the establishment of lasting peace and security. The aggressor must be countered with a strong stance, unwavering unity and integrity of purpose.

94. In such volatile circumstances, young people must take advantage of all their opportunities, be resilient and have the courage to address challenges. To solve any issue, his generation chose not weapons but dialogue. The young people of Georgia favoured negotiations and reconciliation.

95. The Sustainable Development Goals provided opportunities to unify young people on both sides of dividing lines. According to the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda”, the world currently had the largest youth population in history, at 1.8 billion. Many young people saw their potential hindered, but the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office offered hope.

96. **Ms. Chignesse** (Belgium), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the world needed young people to be

part of the solutions to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. However, young people all around the world were suffering, whether because they were living in war and conflict zones, their fundamental human rights were being denied or they were not being treated as equals.

97. The achievement of the Goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls was key for the achievement of all the other Goals. According to a recent United Nations report, it would take 300 years to achieve gender equality at the current rate of progress. Without a significant increase in investments and commitments, the Goals would not be achieved by 2030 and might never be achieved. Member States must provide political support and funding to achieve the Goals and equality, including by guaranteeing high-quality education for all.

98. **Ms. Coppens** (Belgium), speaking as a youth delegate, said that mental health was a shared concern among Belgian young people. Mental health and well-being had been set as the fifth European Youth Goal, and the World Health Organization had highlighted the need to increase the ability of young people to deal with mental health issues. In a time of many challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, it was urgent to seek ways to improve their mental health. Young people were living in an increasingly digitalized world, causing children to become isolated and increasing the pressure on young people to continue to fulfil their duties, even in the middle of a pandemic. Surveys conducted by Belgian youth councils had shown that young people wanted to break the taboo surrounding mental health. Policymakers should focus on preventive measures, provide tailor-made and easily accessible assistance, pay more attention to the impact of social challenges on the well-being of young people, in particular vulnerable groups, and support youth workers and teachers.

99. **Ms. Tariello** (Italy), speaking as a youth delegate, said that allowing young people to be actively involved in shaping the future benefited society. The distance between young people and the core bodies in which decisions were made was ever increasing. A long-lasting commitment was needed to improve the dialogue between young people and institutions. Young people could be made to feel that they belonged in society by enhancing the educational system and offering courses centred on problems such as climate change and access to fundamental human rights and education for all.

100. Italy had organized a side event during the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change entitled “Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition”,

bringing together 400 young participants to pool ideas and share proposals to address the climate crisis. Building upon that experience, Italy had organized a side event focused on youth participation during the high-level week of the current session of the General Assembly.

101. The language used by institutions was often perceived as too difficult to internalize, hindering the participation of young people in many otherwise excellent programmes and preventing both sides from benefiting from each other's involvement. To increase their involvement, younger students should have access to more information about the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, beginning in elementary school. Steps in the right direction included the outstanding work of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office and the Transforming Education Summit, held in New York in September 2022. The United Nations must lead by example in allowing young professionals, students and citizens to participate in decision-making alongside their Governments.

102. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his country, although small and of limited resources, had a social foundation of deeply rooted traditions and solidarity among the various social groups. Any sound policy aimed at achieving social development must foster the ability of communities to exercise their rights.

103. Older persons, persons with disabilities and young persons were among the social groups that had been most affected by the terrorist war against the Syrian Arab Republic and the imposition by external elements of illegal unilateral coercive economic measures. The Government had nevertheless continued to implement wide-ranging reform packages aimed at creating a regulatory and institutional framework. Its economic and social policies were aimed at developing infrastructure and implementing targeted programmes for all groups in society in order to achieve balanced and sustainable development. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour was responsible for managing the social sector and labour market through the creation of a social protection system based on three pillars: social insurance and health care; care for the wounded, the families of martyrs and vulnerable groups; and contribution to social support programmes directed at the poor. Quality social protection services were provided to vulnerable and marginalized groups at centres and institutes in all governorates under the auspices of the Ministry.

104. Creating an enabling environment for social development required close cooperation between

national and international agencies. It was also necessary to support the efforts of the international community to reduce the development gap among countries and to help developing countries to achieve sustainable development. Despite the imposition of economic sanctions, the Syrian Arab Republic continued to implement its plans to eliminate poverty and unemployment; to empower women in political, civic, economic and cultural life; to foster social inclusion; and to promote capacity-building in Syrian institutions.

105. **Mr. Tsogblo** (Togo) said that, according to the harmonized survey on household living standards of the West African Economic and Monetary Union of 2019, the poverty rate in his country had fallen from 58.7 per cent in 2011 to 45.5 per cent in 2019. Nevertheless, the still-high poverty rate showed that the socioeconomic situation remained marked by the persistence of poverty among a large majority of the population. His Government had thus stepped up efforts under its national development programme, which included a road map for making Togo a modern nation with inclusive and sustainable growth by 2025. One of the aims of the programme was to reduce vulnerability by taking into account the vital needs of the population in the design and implementation of development strategies and programmes. To achieve that goal, his Government had established a national fund for inclusive finance, a project for the development of social safety nets and basic services, and a project to support vulnerable populations and agricultural financing incentives based on risk sharing. As a result, various segments of the population, in particular young people and women, had increased access to financial services.

106. Among the measures taken to alleviate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for vulnerable people, his Government had established a digital cash transfer programme; the majority of its beneficiaries had been women. It was currently implementing a health development programme comprising universal health coverage and a digital platform for the provision of free care to pregnant women and newborns, aimed at reducing maternal and neonatal mortality in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

107. As a result of measures to strengthen the protection of women from gender-based discrimination and violence and alleviate the social and cultural burdens of women, the capacity of women to contribute to the country's development had increased. Persons with disabilities were fully integrated into the development, education and health strategy. His

Government had adopted various initiatives for young people, including training in entrepreneurship and loans for young entrepreneurs.

108. **Mr. Sahraoui** (Algeria) said that social development was one of the three pillars of sustainable development and integral to economic prosperity, as it guaranteed development for all and strengthened the social contract among all components of society. The social element must be taken into consideration in any attempt to formulate a new social contract and post-COVID-19 economic models should be based on social justice.

109. Algeria welcomed the recommendation of the Secretary-General for the convening of a world social summit in 2025 and stressed the need to follow the approach that had been established at the World Summit for Social Development and avoid any separation of the social and development dimensions. That future summit should focus on mobilizing resources and connecting social development to the Sustainable Development Goals.

110. Since regaining its sovereignty, the Algerian State had attached great importance to social development. The Government had worked to establish an economic system that aimed to achieve social justice, in accordance with the constitution. Its social policy, which focused on investment in human capital as the key to development, had allowed Algeria to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals before the deadline. Algeria had also achieved high human development indexes even in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic; in 2022, its human development index had jumped to 0.745, placing it among the highest-ranking countries in North Africa. In addition, development gaps among social groups in Algeria had disappeared as a result of a policy of prioritizing the country's marginalized zones in its programmes.

111. Despite the destructive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Algeria had not deviated from its approach to social development but had in fact strengthened it by ensuring social assistance to needy families and creating an unemployment benefit. Authorities had raised wages in order to address global inflation, protecting the purchasing power of citizens; a new law allocated 19.7 per cent of the state budget for social transfers.

112. Universal, quality education was a pillar of development and necessary to ensure a bright future for children. Algeria was proud of its achievements in that area. All children were enrolled in school. Algeria had turned out more than 5 million university graduates and had improved the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of university education. Algeria had also helped other

countries to achieve development by hosting nearly 60,000 foreign students from over 60 countries.

113. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was the road map guiding collective efforts towards development and the only way to address current challenges. Sustainable development would remain only a dream, however, in the absence of the tools for implementation. Algeria therefore called on Member States to facilitate technology transfer and to create practical and sustainable solutions to the problems that hampered development, so that no one was left behind.

114. **Mr. Salas de los Rios** (Peru) said that the negative effects of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, inflation and rising energy and food costs had stalled collective progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and reversed gains already made. Vulnerable groups such as the poor, indigenous peoples, women, persons with disabilities, older persons, boys, girls and adolescents suffered the most from the negative effects of global crises. Poverty prevented them from fully and effectively enjoying their civil, political, economic, social, environmental and cultural rights. As a latent threat to social cohesion and democracy, poverty was the greatest challenge facing the world and the main obstacle to the achievement of sustainable development for all. All Member States must work together to get back on track to reduce inequalities, end poverty, achieve zero hunger, establish inclusive and high-quality health and education systems, ensure decent employment and promote peace and justice. Only by uniting could the world ensure the development of all its citizens without any distinction or discrimination.

115. The commitments of the World Summit for Social Development and the Sustainable Development Goals were consistent with his Government's policies for combating poverty and promoting social inclusion. The Peru Vision 2050 represented the aspirations of the Peruvian people, serving as a guide for the continuous improvement of public policies to ensure a decent life of well-being, justice and security for all, without gaps in access to high-quality universal public services, through inclusive and sustainable social and economic development. The resources required to support those policies were sustained by a growing economy together with a sound economic policy.

116. **Mr. Hamid** (Maldives) said that, to comprehensively address challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts, economic uncertainty, food insecurity and climate change, the international community must redouble its commitment



to the protection and promotion of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

117. As the world emerged from the worst of the pandemic, there was an opportunity to design recovery policies to advance gender inclusivity. His country had always been committed to achieving gender equality in every area of life. The Parliament had passed the Gender Equality Act in 2016 and had amended the Decentralization Act in 2019 to establish a quota for women's seats in local council elections. Women and children bore the greatest burden of, and were disproportionately affected by, the impacts of climate change. The unequal participation of women in decision-making and labour markets compounded inequalities and often prevented women from fully contributing to climate-related planning and policymaking. Without adequate representation of women in decision-making, there was a risk of creating laws, policies, budgets and conflict responses that failed to respond appropriately to the needs of almost half the world's population.

118. His Government was committed to ensuring inclusive, equitable and high-quality education for all, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4, through inclusive education policies that offered equal opportunities for girls and boys, covering preschool learning to higher secondary education. Its scheme to provide free education to students pursuing their first degrees had resulted in increased enrolment.

119. Almost half of Maldivians were under the age of 35. Through its youth bill, his Government was seeking to expand access to health care, employment, economic opportunities and education for young people. Actively engaging with young people was critical for shaping decisions and policies, driving social progress and inspiring political change. Listening to the perspectives and concerns of young people would result in greater buy-in from them.

120. **Ms. Niamba Congo** (Burkina Faso) said that, in the current situation, marked by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and exacerbated by security and humanitarian crises and climate change, the international community had an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the protection and promotion of young people, older persons, persons with disabilities and the family.

121. Burkina Faso had been shaken by a security crisis that had caused an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, with mass internal displacement. Her Government was currently finalizing a transition road map focused on social and humanitarian issues. Initiatives were being pursued to reduce inequalities in the provision of public services, promote universal access to health care and

develop new reforms for the provision of free health care to vulnerable people, pregnant women and children under the age of 5. To combat food insecurity, an agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry policy, a food and nutrition security policy and a plan to support people vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition had been adopted.

122. Young people and women constituted the largest segments of the population of Burkina Faso. Her Government was taking measures to address poverty, unemployment and underemployment among young people and women, their inadequate access to education, professional training, health care, social protection and information and communications technology, their low participation in decision-making, violence against women and girls, and forced and early marriage. Several funds had been established to finance, at concessional rates, the activities of low-income populations and were aimed at employment promotion, youth initiatives and income-generating activities for women. Care centres for victims of violence had been established, a toll-free number had been launched for reporting gender-based violence, and procedures for the provision of psychosocial care to survivors of gender-based violence had been implemented.

123. In the light of the challenges confronting older persons and persons with disabilities, her Government had taken measures to strengthen the relevant legal and institutional frameworks. Nevertheless, older persons and persons with disabilities remained vulnerable and often experienced violations of their fundamental rights, including the right to protection against all situations and practices that might compromise their physical and/or moral integrity, their health or their development.

124. **Ms. Ahmad** (United Arab Emirates), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her country, with over 200 nationalities, religions and ethnicities, was fully committed to social development and the improvement of quality of life for its inhabitants. It had passed laws and launched initiatives to serve all groups in society, particularly young people, older persons and persons with disabilities.

125. The United Arab Emirates attached great importance to young people and trusted them to represent the State at the regional and international levels. The United Nations youth delegate programme was an outstanding programme for fostering the participation of young people in the international decision-making process. At the national level, the Federal Youth Authority had been established in 2018 with the goal of empowering young people. In addition, the Emirates Youth Council provided advice and counsel

to private and public sector institutions and worked directly with the Prime Minister's office in reviewing Government policies, developing youth strategies and soliciting the views of young people on matters that affected them.

126. **Mr. Al Saqqaf** (United Arab Emirates) said that his Government attached particular importance to individuals at every stage of life. Older persons in the United Arab Emirates were referred to as "senior citizens" out of respect for their efforts in serving the nation. In October 2018, the United Arab Emirates had launched a national policy on older persons aimed at improving their standard of living and ensuring their participation in the country's social fabric.

127. The United Arab Emirates was keen to protect the social rights of persons with disabilities, or, as they were referred to in the country, "people of determination". The State had passed laws that were in line with best global practices and the highest values of Emirati society, which were based on empowering and investing in human beings. In 2017, the Government had launched a national policy to empower persons with disabilities that addressed matters related to health, rehabilitation, education, vocational training, social protection, culture, sport and the promotion of the family. In 2018, the State had developed a national classification system for persons with disabilities and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it had launched a guide to ensure persons with disabilities had remote, home-based access to services.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*