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Chair: Ms. Kaczmarska (Vice-Chair) (Poland)
later: Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic)

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In the absence of Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic), Ms. Kaczmarska (Poland), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 68: Promotion and protection of human rights (continued)

(a) Implementation of human rights instruments (continued) ([A/77/40](#), [A/77/44](#), [A/77/228](#), [A/77/230](#), [A/77/231](#), [A/77/279](#), [A/77/289](#) and [A/77/344](#))

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(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (continued) ([A/77/149](#), [A/77/168](#), [A/77/181](#), [A/77/195](#), [A/77/220](#), [A/77/227](#), [A/77/247](#), [A/77/255](#), [A/77/311](#), [A/77/328](#) and [A/77/356](#))

(d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (continued) ([A/77/36](#))

1. **Mr. Arbeiter** (Canada) said that his delegation's contribution to the work of the Committee would continue to be guided by the purpose of better protecting and promoting human rights, working collectively to reinforce and rebuild the foundations upon which peace could flourish. Canada continued to partner with Zambia to better understand and address the challenges presented by child, early and forced marriage, including in the context of uneven recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the increasing threats posed by climate change and conflict, and the global disparities in access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. While progress had been made in the years since the resolution to end child, early and forced marriage had first been submitted, data showed that the international community would fail to meet target 5.3 of

the Sustainable Development Goals if it did not increase its efforts. His delegation hoped that the present year's resolution would afford a platform through which all States could recommit to getting back on track.

2. Canada would again submit a resolution on the situation of human rights in Iran in full solidarity with the courageous women and girls peacefully protesting against the actions of the so-called morality police. Moreover, it would continue to commend the resilience and fortitude of the people of Ukraine in resistance to the unjustifiable and illegal invasion by the Russian Federation and would support all efforts to ensure accountability for the human rights violations and serious crimes being committed against Ukrainians.

3. Canada had extended an open invitation to all special procedures to visit the country and remained open to receiving feedback on its efforts to address its own human rights challenges, including in relation to Indigenous Peoples, racism and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

4. His country had serious concerns about misinformation, attacks on journalists and human rights defenders and the narrowing of civil society. The Committee's work should contribute to the protection of those persons and be based on evidence, data and analysis from credible sources, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and his predecessors.

5. **Ms. González López** (El Salvador) said that her country had always advocated a comprehensive vision of international migration that focused on human rights and rejected the criminalization of migrants, regardless of their migratory status. Furthermore, it regarded non-detention, non-family separation and access to justice as rights and migration as an option, not an obligation. The adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum represented a major step in the direction of a more comprehensive approach to migration. As a champion of the Global Compact and as interim Chair of the 2022 Regional Conference on Migration, El Salvador had promoted the approach to migration from both a regional and global perspective through the implementation of measures for safe, orderly and regular migration, the development of activities for dialogue and exchange of experiences with countries and international organizations.

6. The first review cycle of the Global Compact had identified areas of access to rights for migrants where work remained to be done. As many migrants continued to take dangerous routes that put their lives at risk,

barriers to accessing rights and services continued to keep them from the promise of a dignified life for themselves and their families.

7. The Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum provided a guideline for the next steps to be taken. First, as migrant disappearances were a reality that could not be ignored, it was hoped that the Secretary-General's recommendations would address that issue. Second, States must continue to work together to facilitate access to basic services for all migrants, regardless of their migratory status, but also to promote consular cooperation and guarantee migrants access to documentation. Third, El Salvador was committed to building evidence-based narratives about migrants as an essential means of combating discrimination, xenophobia and racism, which were a latent threat to the security and dignity of all migrants. A comprehensive approach to migrants' rights should be reflected in the proposed indicators to support States in the review of the implementation of the Global Compact, which would be crucial to demonstrating the commitment made in 2018 to change the reality for migrants and to move from words to deeds.

8. Since the adoption of the Global Compact, there had been over 20,000 documented deaths of migrants. It was imperative not to allow that figure to increase or to forget about migrants when discussing human rights. Real action and solidarity were needed between origin, transit and destination countries, which included a commitment to broaden and diversify the pathways to truly achieve safe, orderly and regular migration as a fundamental element to prevent and address vulnerabilities along the migration journey.

9. **Mr. Oddone** (Argentina) said that his country's foreign policy was guided by the inclusion of all, respect for diversity and the commitment to achieving the unrestricted application of all human rights. His Government prioritized ensuring the recognition and effective enjoyment of the rights of all women, girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons.

10. As part of its efforts to promote the universalization of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Argentina was working, together with France, on a third campaign to encourage more States to ratify the Convention, with the aim of reaching 100 ratifications by 2025.

11. Argentina had ratified all existing international and regional instruments related to the abolition of the death penalty and was promoting various initiatives aimed at achieving that goal. A universal and binding

legal instrument that ensured the full enjoyment of the rights of older persons was also needed as the current international human rights legal framework was not specific or coherent enough.

12. Argentina had ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol and participated actively in such initiatives as the Global Alliance to end trade in goods used for capital punishment and torture, which it had launched together with Mongolia and the European Union. Argentina supported the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering, which proposed practical guidance for non-coercive interviews and the implementation of associated procedural safeguards. The renewal of the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity through Human Rights Council resolution [50/10](#) was welcome.

13. His delegation participated actively in interactive dialogues and in the negotiation of draft resolutions as it firmly believed in the need to continue strengthening the universal system for the promotion and protection of human rights.

14. **Archbishop Caccia** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the principle that all human beings were born free and equal in dignity and rights must be the starting point for all efforts to promote and protect human rights. Whenever that was not recognized, human rights and freedoms were easily undermined and ignored. Dignity was inherent in the very nature of the human person and could never be considered a concession from the State or from any other actor. Dignity was not a subjective value and was never contingent on one's status, power or connections. Nowhere was that more apparent than in the violation of the right to life, particularly of the unborn, the sick, those with disabilities and older persons. The proper implementation of human rights instruments demanded the constant reaffirmation that human rights derived from the inherent dignity of the human person.

15. Freedom and solidarity should both be emphasized as necessary for human well-being. To view them as competing rather than complementary values weakened both. Solidarity at the expense of freedom risked subsuming individuals into group identities without regard for their individual good. Freedom detached from solidarity led to a false understanding of rights as ends rather than as the essential means of guaranteeing the conditions necessary for human flourishing. It also led to self-referential and alienating behaviour that

fragmented community life and intergenerational solidarity.

16. Human rights must be understood as being indivisible and interrelated as well as at the service of the common good. Attempts to promote novel, controversial concepts of human rights that did not enjoy agreement must be avoided. Such efforts, including those made within the United Nations system and the treaty bodies, constituted what Pope Francis had often termed “ideological colonization”. Moreover, the promotion of certain so-called rights as if they were legitimate obligations offered a convenient scapegoat to those who also denied established human rights obligations. Both the community of nations and single States should therefore avoid prioritizing or politicizing rights or asserting as rights ideas that lacked a foundation in treaty or custom. Rather, they should ensure that people could enjoy clearly established human rights and fundamental freedoms.

17. **Mr. Bauwens** (Belgium) said that his delegation wished to highlight the flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights to which Ukrainian citizens had been subjected since February 2022 following the attack by the Russian Federation. Such violations were unacceptable and must be duly prosecuted.

18. While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights formed the common foundation of human rights, some sought to relativize human rights, explaining that they did not fit their traditions or that they corresponded to a Western agenda. Others preferred to instrumentalize human rights or apply them selectively. Neither cultural relativism nor national sovereignty could be used to deprive some citizens of a country or region of their rights, whether they were civil and political or economic and social.

19. The principle of universality clearly applied to women and girls. No tradition, religion, cultural value or custom could justify gender discrimination, gender-based violence or violations of the rights of women and girls. Belgium continued to monitor closely the negative developments in the human rights situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. It was impossible to guarantee the stability and prosperity of a country if half of the population was excluded. The continued repression of women human rights defenders in Iran and the response by the authorities to the protests there was also of deep concern.

20. The Committee provided a forum for frank discussions on human rights. Engaging in dialogue helped to formulate responses to common challenges. Stopping that dialogue did not provide solutions.

Belgium welcomed the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the special procedures, which continued to be of utmost importance. It was imperative to guarantee the independence of those mechanisms and to facilitate the possibility for them to conduct country visits. Belgium had issued a standing invitation to the special procedures and encouraged those who had not yet done so to do the same.

21. The effective functioning of the human rights treaty bodies was vital, and Belgium firmly supported the process to modernize them while preserving their integrity and independence. It hoped to contribute to a dynamic and effective Human Rights Council that was capable of fulfilling all aspects of its mandate and wished to cooperate with all Member States and civil society to advance the promotion and protection of human rights everywhere in the world. Indeed, civil society was a key stakeholder in the promotion and protection of human rights and in many places in the world its role was unfortunately under pressure. The space for critical voices to be heard was shrinking while the number of targeted direct attacks was increasing. It was vital to ensure the defence of defenders.

22. **Mr. Prytula** (Ukraine) said that his country was fully committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which were universal, indivisible, interdependent, equal and non-discriminating. The interlinked and mutually reinforcing pillars of peace and security, development and human rights were the foundation of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. Ukraine intended to work together with all interested stakeholders to strengthen the role of the Human Rights Council, as the main body in the sphere of human rights protection.

23. Ukraine strongly supported the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in addressing human rights violations around the world, in particular the human rights abuses and war crimes committed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. The role of the Council and its mechanisms in preventing impunity and the activity of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine were of critical importance. In its recent report ([A/77/533](#)), the Commission had found reasonable grounds to conclude that war crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law had been committed in Ukraine. It had documented patterns of summary executions, unlawful confinement, torture, ill-treatment, rape and other sexual violence committed in areas occupied by the Russian armed forces across four regions. People had been detained, some had been unlawfully deported to the Russian Federation and many were still reported missing. Victims of all ages had been

affected by sexual violence, with family members, including children, sometimes being forced to witness the crimes. Given the gravity of the violations, there was an undeniable need for accountability. In that regard, the Commission had recommended enhanced coordination of international and national accountability efforts to improve effectiveness and prevent harm to victims and witnesses. Ukraine called on all partners to enhance the efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice. Accountability for all perpetrators and their commanders must be ensured.

24. Ukraine supported the work of the United Nations treaty bodies system and was grateful for the tireless efforts of its members aimed at helping Member States to implement their obligations under the international human rights instruments more efficiently. It had acceded to and ratified the vast majority of international treaties and agreements in the field of human rights and fulfilled its reporting obligations faithfully. Ukraine also valued the universal periodic review as a unique mechanism to improve the human rights situation in Member States and actively cooperated with the system of special procedures, which was an essential element of the United Nations human rights machinery. Having extended a standing invitation to all special procedures, Ukraine looked forward to their country visits to monitor and document the human rights violations committed by the Russian Federation.

25. It was crucial to maintain an effective and independent human rights monitoring presence in Ukraine in the aftermath of the full-scale invasion and war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which had caused a dramatic and rapid deterioration of the human rights situation. In that context, his country's cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) could be regarded as exemplary. The human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine could help to prevent further human rights abuses and bring those responsible to justice.

26. **Mr. Kulhánek** (Czechia) said that, as a steadfast advocate of all internationally recognized human rights, Czechia was determined to uphold the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It was committed to international human rights mechanisms and supported the newly appointed United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

27. The state of human rights in several countries remained a concern. Czechia condemned in the strongest possible terms the unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. It would never recognize the illegal

annexation of the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Provinces of Ukraine, just as it had not recognized the illegal annexation of Crimea. The Russian Federation must immediately cease its military attacks and withdraw its forces from the entire territory of Ukraine. The atrocities committed by Russian troops against civilians in Mariupol, Bucha, Izium and elsewhere were horrifying. Those responsible for the countless human rights violations must be held to account. Czechia strongly supported the establishment of a special tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine and also strongly condemned the escalating repression in the Russian Federation, where there had been a clear systematic crackdown on civil society, human rights defenders, independent media outlets, political opposition and persons belonging to minorities. The recent adoption of a Human Rights Council resolution establishing the mandate for a special rapporteur for the human rights situation in the country was appreciated.

28. While Czechia welcomed the release of the OHCHR assessment report of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China, the decision not to hold a thorough discussion on the substance of the report at the upcoming session of the Human Rights Council was regrettable. The existence of political re-education camps remained a serious concern. The Chinese authorities were urged to close down the camps and immediately release all human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers who had been detained for exercising their basic rights. The situation in Hong Kong, including the impact of the National Security Law, was also worrying.

29. Gravely concerned about the staggering human rights violations in Afghanistan, Czechia called on the Taliban to reverse its decisions impacting the rights of women and girls, to prosecute, try and punish the perpetrators of domestic violence and to cease the stigmatization and penalization of victims.

30. In Iran, the suppression of the freedom of expression and opinion, peaceful assembly and association, the lack of free flow of information, including restrictions on Internet access, and the excessive and widespread use of force against protestors was also deeply worrying. Czechia urged Iran to end its violent crackdown, which had led to a large number of casualties.

31. Lastly, Czechia remained very concerned about the serious human rights violations in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and condemned the continued persecution of members of the opposition, human rights defenders and media workers. It fully supported the fact-

finding mission established by the Human Rights Council in that connection.

32. **Ms. El Guera** (Mauritania) said that the human rights situation in her country had seen significant improvement, in particular with respect to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The Government had redoubled its efforts to solidify the rule of law and institutions and establish democracy. To that end, Mauritania, in cooperation with OHCHR, was drafting a national strategy to promote and protect human rights. In order to enhance economic and social rights, the Government continued to implement the State-funded Expanded Priority Programme, which comprised the largest number of concurrent human rights projects in the country's history and aimed to increase citizens' purchasing power, improve access to basic services and create job opportunities.

33. The Government was strengthening the rule of law by combating contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons. The Mauritanian Constitution criminalized slavery and established legal deterrents. Economic, social and development programmes had been established to enshrine justice and equality of opportunity and monitoring and assessment mechanisms had also been created. In that regard, the country had launched a national action plan to combat those phenomena, which comprised the four pillars of prevention, training, legal accountability and local and regional cooperation. Workshops had been held to train administrative, judicial and security authorities and national civil society organizations on the law criminalizing slavery and trafficking in persons. Awareness-raising campaigns had been developed for human rights organizations in the country.

34. During his visit to the country the previous May, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences had observed the great strides made in that area. The Government had formed a high-level ministerial committee on combatting trafficking in persons and a technical committee to implement the recommendations based on the Special Rapporteur's visit.

35. The Government prioritized constructive engagement with human rights mechanisms as essential and effective tools for promoting and protecting human rights globally. It had submitted reports in line with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Arab Charter on Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

36. **Mr. Kim Song** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that, despite the international community's efforts to protect and promote human rights, serious challenges remained in various parts of the world. Inequality and economic stagnation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic were worsening rapidly while conflicts and natural disasters were claiming many lives and devastating communities. Such tragedies constituted a serious violation of the recognized international human rights laws and regulations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Despite the increasing number of human rights violations, efforts were being made not to eradicate such phenomena but to stage confrontation in the human rights arena in pursuit of political aims that had nothing to do with human rights. The issue of human rights was being abused in order to infringe on the sovereignty of States and interfere in their internal affairs.

37. At the same time as trying to impose their values on others, the United States of America and other Western countries were stigmatizing "disobedient" countries as human rights violators in an attempt to overturn their social systems. Seeking to overthrow a system chosen by the people of a country constituted a human rights violation and an insult to the people concerned. Furthermore, while rampant racism and racial discrimination in Western countries continued to go unaddressed in the international arena, developing countries were subjected to collective attacks irrespective of the human rights situation on the ground. As a result, international human rights forums had turned into a disorderly stage for political deception, where the arbitrariness and high-handedness of the United States and the West contravened the principle of sovereign equality. In order for the United Nations to remain truly faithful to its mission to protect and promote human rights, it should treat all Member States equally in conformity with its lifeline principles of impartiality, objectivity and strict neutrality.

38. Under its "people first" policy, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea focused on taking responsibility for and promoting the human rights of its people. It had strengthened its efforts in that regard even during times of severe crises, the long-standing blockade and pressure of hostile forces and natural disasters. The socialist system centred on the popular masses was the most reliable guarantee for the protection and promotion of genuine human rights. His country would continue to enhance the human rights of its people and actively join the international community in its efforts to realize the true protection and promotion of human rights.

39. **Mr. Amorín** (Uruguay) said that the protection of human rights must be based on dialogue and cooperation and not on confrontation. For the Committee to be credible and effective, it must be guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity.

40. Uruguay continued to call for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty as a contribution to respecting human dignity and strengthening human rights. Having abolished the death penalty in 1907, Uruguay understood that such irreversible punishment was not exempt from potential miscarriages of justice, and that there was no conclusive evidence that it contributed to the reduction of criminal behaviour.

41. Similarly, it was more relevant than ever for the Committee to maintain its firm condemnation of cases of extrajudicial executions by demanding that all States put an end to that practice and take effective measures to prevent, combat and eliminate the phenomenon in all its forms and manifestations. The fight against extrajudicial executions must be based on prevention, investigation and accountability. To that end, it was important to consider the gender perspective and identity when analysing the nature of killings or deaths, forms of harm and violence, and risk or vulnerability factors for certain individuals and groups.

42. Uruguay understood that respect for human rights and the administration of justice were deeply interconnected. The integrity of the judicial system and the independence of the legal profession were essential requirements for the protection of human rights, the rule of law, good governance and democracy and for avoiding any discrimination in the administration of justice.

43. The increasing interconnectedness of the world demonstrated the need for greater commitment to international cooperation, multilateralism and the defence of human rights. In that context, Uruguay called on the Committee to continue to engage in the difficult task of protecting and fulfilling the human rights of all, paying special attention to vulnerable groups in societies. The Committee therefore could not ignore the challenges faced by older persons, which had been notably exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic and had been compounded by the growing food crisis affecting all Member States. As an active member of the Group of Friends of Older Persons, Uruguay understood that placing older persons at the centre of public policy and revitalizing the agenda for them was fundamental to post-pandemic economic and social recovery efforts.

44. *Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic) took the Chair.*

45. **Mr. Djiguemde** (Burkina Faso) said that human rights must be at the heart of the global response to such contemporary challenges as terrorism, COVID-19 and climate change. Burkina Faso had clearly expressed its commitment to promoting and protecting human rights by endorsing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratifying several human rights conventions and treaties and strengthening its cooperation with international and regional human rights bodies.

46. In April 2018, his Government had adopted a sectoral policy on justice and human rights for the period 2018–2027. However, the policy was being implemented in a national context marked by the resurgence of terrorist attacks and the rise of violent extremism, leading to serious violations of fundamental rights, including the right to life, with more than 2,000 civilians and members of the defence and security forces killed; the right to education, with 16.96 per cent of educational facilities forced to close in May 2022; the right to health, with 39 per cent of health facilities affected by insecurity in August 2022; the right to drinking water and the right of access to justice, owing to the closure of courts and the inaccessibility of drinking water as a result of major security challenges.

47. In order to provide a comprehensive response, Burkina Faso had undertaken to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights through several initiatives relating to the fight against terrorism, the restoration of the integrity of national territory and the preservation of peace and social cohesion. In March 2021, a law had been adopted to operationalize the national mechanism for the prevention of torture. In addition, strategies relating to the care of internally displaced persons and education in emergency situations were being implemented. Furthermore, to facilitate the fulfilment of human rights commitments in a difficult national context, Burkina Faso had signed an agreement with the United Nations in October 2021 to establish an OHCHR country office.

48. In March 2022, Burkina Faso had submitted its second report under article 73 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families ([CMW/C/BFA/2](#)). In addition, it maintained an ongoing dialogue with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including the special procedures, and was preparing for the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review.

49. With regard to justice, the first trials of suspected terrorists had been held and the crackdown on hate speech and on the stigmatization of communities had been stepped up. The independent and impartial courts

were conducting investigations into allegations of human rights abuses attributed to the defence and security forces with a view to shedding light on those allegations and punishing the perpetrators. Action was also being taken to provide ongoing training in human rights and international humanitarian law for the defence and security forces and security assistants. As the efforts of Burkina Faso to promote and protect human rights could not succeed without open cooperation between States, he thanked the international community for its support and called for the strengthening of multilateralism.

50. **Ms. Alameri** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country had made efforts to develop its legislative system in order to strengthen human rights. In recent years, the State had approved a legislative package that covered the areas of personal status, civil transactions, criminal procedure and combating discrimination and intolerance to bring the law into line with contemporary needs and international human rights instruments. In 2022, eight decrees and ministerial decisions had been issued that aimed at strengthening labour rights through improvements to work environments.

51. The establishment of the National Human Rights Institution was one of the most important measures taken by the country to strengthen human rights. That mechanism differed from other governmental bodies in that it was financially and administratively independent. Its work was based on the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). The National Human Rights Committee, a governmental coordinating body, was responsible for preparing a national human rights plan, including a road map to support progress, in consultation with Emirati civil society organizations.

52. The Human Rights Council played an important role in promoting and protecting human rights. The United Arab Emirates, a member of the Council for the period 2022–2024, looked forward to strengthening cooperation and constructive dialogue and enhancing partnerships among countries with a view to enriching the Council's work. The United Arab Emirates also supported the important role of the universal periodic review. In late August 2022, the National Human Rights Committee had launched a preparatory process for the drafting of the fourth national report on human rights.

53. The United Arab Emirates sought to reflect its human rights aspirations through its membership in the Security Council. The country had, for example, called for the need for Afghanistan to remove restrictions on women's participation in the labour force and to respect

the right of girls to attend school. The United Arab Emirates supported the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which could alleviate the challenges faced by women and girls. In its national capacity, the United Arab Emirates also focused on the provision of humanitarian aid to areas in need around the world.

54. **Mr. Kvalheim** (Norway) said that disregard for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles was a root cause and driver of instability that threatened security and upended development gains. The protection of human rights through rules-based international cooperation, however, made the world safer and more stable, prosperous, fair and equal. The principle that all human beings were born free and equal in dignity and rights did not include a caveat or disclaimer. There was no room for intolerance or discrimination. There could be no discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. States must increase their efforts to combat the discrimination and persecution of sexual and gender minorities. Similarly, there could be no discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, ethnicity or cultural or linguistic background, or disability.

55. The space for civil society and human rights defenders was shrinking at an alarming rate. They played a crucial role in holding States to account as the first to notice and warn of backsliding, shrinking civic space and the erosion of human rights and the rule of law. As a consequence, they faced threats, harassment, violence and incarceration. Women human rights defenders in particular continued to face multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination owing to their work – and their gender. Nevertheless, they continued to stand up for human rights, democracy and sustainability. They were owed a great debt for the risks they were willing to take and the threats and reprisals they faced in order to improve societies. Without criticism, there could not be positive change. Their voices were necessary to ensure peaceful, inclusive and democratic societies. For those and other voices to be heard, the right to freely express views and opinions must be safeguarded.

56. Freedom of expression was particularly important during armed conflict. Propaganda and disinformation were being weaponized. The importance of social resilience and an independent and pluralistic media could not be overstated. It was more important than ever to support journalists and other media workers who risked their lives to document, inform and give a voice to those that needed to be heard. Female journalists were often among those that had been forced and harassed into silence.

57. A strong human rights pillar was needed more than ever. The international human rights institutions must be defended and strengthened. As a strong supporter of the mandate and leadership of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Norway believed that ambitions must be matched with both human and financial resources.

58. **Mr. Alabhol** (Kuwait) said that, since its independence in 1962, his country had been concerned with promoting and protecting human rights. The Constitution of Kuwait contained several provisions that aligned with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments. The State had adopted legislation and measures that reflected its respect for its international commitments and had established mechanisms for their implementation, including, in 2019, a national permanent committee for the preparation of reports and for follow-up on recommendations, with membership from all levels of Government. Kuwait had held consultative meetings with civil society organizations before presenting its reports to committees. Kuwait had continued its efforts to protect and promote human rights on the ground by establishing the National Diwan for Human Rights in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 48/134 on national institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights.

59. Kuwait attached high importance to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by incorporating them into development plans, in accordance with Kuwait Vision 2035. That Vision specifically provided for the enhancement of the rights of persons with disabilities. The country's General Authority for Disability Affairs had developed a strategy for the period 2020–2025, which covered the areas of education, employment, health care and community recreational activities and was aimed at enhancing the integration of persons with disabilities.

60. Kuwaiti women were an indispensable pillar of social development. The State had made efforts to eliminate the stereotypes that led to discrimination against women and to strengthen their participation in society. Steady gains had been made in that area ever since women had been granted the right to vote and to stand for election in 2005, and they took part in political decision-making through their appointment to Government positions.

61. In Kuwait, there were more than 300 people whose whereabouts had remained unknown for more than 30 years, an experience shared by other States that had experienced armed conflicts. Kuwait, during its term as

member of the Security Council in the period 2018–2019, had sponsored Security Council resolution 2474 (2019) on missing persons in armed conflict, one of the first of its kind. Kuwait had also joined the Global Alliance for the Missing. The delegation of Kuwait called on all parties to armed conflicts to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law by actively searching for missing persons and repatriating remains in accordance with recognized standards.

62. **Ms. Eneström** (Sweden) said that the first mass grave excavated in Izium, Ukraine, a few weeks earlier had contained 436 bodies and 90 per cent of those had born traces of violence. Six were children. The most common injuries had been mutilated genital organs, amputated or broken arms and legs and bullet wounds. Many of the bodies had had their arms tied behind their backs. Some had had nooses around their necks. The past several months had shown with painful clarity what a world without respect for human rights and international law was like. It was the world of Bucha and Izium and the horrors of the past months under Russian control, and of countless other places of unspeakable cruelty and despair around the world.

63. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all subsequent legally binding treaties were created by women and men from all continents and from different religious, political and philosophical traditions to prove one thing: that war, oppression and glaring inequalities did not have to be the destiny of humankind. They were created in the hope and the conviction that the world could do better. The past 70 years had indeed proven that human rights, democracy and the rule of law were not just words on paper. If respected, they were a blueprint for building societies that were freer and more just, with less hunger and less fear. The laws and institutions that had been created at the national and international levels to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law had made a difference by establishing structures that helped States to debate and resolve their differences through peaceful means, rather than through violence and oppression. Together with the scientific breakthroughs of the past decades, they helped to explain why the world had become freer, richer, healthier and more well-governed than at any other time in human history.

64. What had been built could also be destroyed, however. Global democratic backsliding and deteriorating human rights situations in countries around the world gave cause for serious concern. In the present challenging times, States must do their utmost to uphold the international laws and institutions that they had jointly created and designed and that had

served them so well in creating freer, more prosperous and more equal societies. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of every State and the equal rights and dignity of every person must be respected. Accountability for violations and abuses must be ensured. States could and must do better.

65. **Mr. Nze** (Nigeria) said that his country was committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which were key elements in the pursuit of sustainable peace and security and the Sustainable Development Goals. Nigeria was not only a protector and promoter of human rights within its own territory but had also proven over the years to be a defender of such rights abroad through its well-documented peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. It also participated fully in international human rights institutions and had ratified practically all international human rights instruments.

66. Nigeria called on Member States to cooperate with human rights instruments and institutions, which should be used in line with the principles of objectivity, impartiality, non-selectivity and non-politicization. The work done should engender trust in the human rights institutions, and efforts should be made to avoid canvassing certain ideological preferences, especially when they did not enjoy consensus or show sensitivity to the huge cultural differences among Member States. In that respect, the United Nations system should take into account the sensitive nature of using controversial themes that did not enjoy consensus, bearing in mind the position of Member States, and should avoid the politicization of human rights issues.

67. His country's commitment to the universal periodic review was based on the equality of treatment that it provided for all Member States, including an opportunity for States to indicate the steps that they had taken to improve their human rights situations. Country-specific human rights issues were best handled through the universal periodic review mechanism, since it avoided unnecessary grandstanding.

68. In line with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, it was important to avoid establishing a hierarchy of rights, prioritizing certain rights over others or creating new rights that were unknown to international human rights law. Civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights, including those that had a direct impact on development, should always be addressed with the principle of the equality of all rights in mind. In that way, States would be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure that no person was left behind.

69. **Ms. Umulisa** (Rwanda) said that her country regarded the universal periodic review as a transparent, positive and unique mechanism that enhanced States' commitment to improving human rights on the ground and as a potent instrument for change where all concerned stakeholders could participate directly or indirectly. The treaty bodies also played an important role in monitoring the implementation by States parties of their treaty obligations. The recommendations made by those bodies had greatly strengthened States' domestic legal regimes and the best practices identified had helped Governments to find new ways of promoting and protecting the human rights of their citizens. Monitoring and protecting human rights were a continuous commitment, and the international community must endeavour to unify its forces to hold perpetrators of gross human rights violations to account. There was no doubt that human rights abuses must be addressed in a comprehensive manner through cooperation, dialogue and consultation.

70. Over the past two decades, Rwanda had made important strides in promoting and ensuring the enjoyment of human rights by all. As a State party to the principal international and regional covenants on human rights and all major human rights bodies, Rwanda was committed to the observance of human rights as universal, inalienable, interdependent, interrelated and indivisible. The Constitution of Rwanda was built on the principle of the equal rights and equal treatment of all citizens and persons without distinction and guaranteed fundamental rights and freedoms.

71. Rwanda attached great significance to a human rights-based approach to development, which it recognized as a comprehensive process indivisible from economic, sociocultural, civil and political rights. Lasting progress in that respect required effective national development policies as well as equitable economic relations at the international and regional levels.

72. In Rwanda, the national independent commission for human rights was tasked with the promotion and protection of human rights and advised the competent bodies on issues related to legislation, general compliance and the implementation of international human rights instruments. Rwanda was committed to the observance of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

73. **Mr. Yahiaoui** (Algeria) said that his country affirmed its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and respect for the obligations emanating from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international instruments. Algeria

called on all States to respect such obligations and to ensure human dignity in all circumstances. In addition, Algeria urged States to avoid the politicization of human rights issues and stressed that the principles of impartiality, independence, non-selectivity, objectivity and coordination with the Governments concerned remained the basic conditions for the achievement of the desired objectives.

74. Algeria supported the Human Rights Council as the body established by the international community to consider human rights situations in States, in accordance with an inclusive approach that fostered a climate of trust. Algeria also stressed the need for respect for the specific characteristics of countries and the avoidance of double standards. In that context, Algeria urged all States to promote dialogue and constructive international cooperation when it came to human rights, including the right to development, in all countries, without favouritism and in a manner that served national priorities. Algeria affirmed the importance of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights in accordance with national needs. It also stressed the need to improve coordination between national, regional and international human rights mechanisms.

75. The Government, out of a commitment to modernizing its institutions in line with the vision enshrined in the new Constitution, had developed reform measures in accordance with international standards of governance and the rule of law and based on the principle of participatory democracy. Recently, mechanisms such as the Constitutional Court, the High Council for Youth and the National Civil Society Observatory had been established, which would contribute to progress in the promotion and protection of human rights.

76. The previous week, Algeria had been elected as a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2023–2025 by a large number of votes, which reflected the recognition of the country's ongoing commitment to human rights. In November 2022, Algeria intended to submit its fourth report to the universal periodic review, which would detail the accomplishments made since the previous report. Algeria would also continue to coordinate with various United Nations mechanisms to organize country visits.

77. **Ms. Mavale** (Mozambique) said that her country had continued its efforts to promote and protect human rights, which constituted one of the pillars of its Constitution. Mozambique had approved an action plan on implementing the recommendations made in the third cycle of the universal periodic review and had held a national conference for the dissemination of the

recommendations in March 2022. In addition, an interministerial commission for human rights and international humanitarian law had been created in order to coordinate the preparation of reports and other communications to regional and international human rights forums and to follow-up on their recommendations at the domestic level.

78. In May 2022, Mozambique had held the second session of the sectorial political dialogue with the European Union, at which the following important issues were addressed: the follow-up to the recommendations of the third cycle of the universal periodic review; the protection of human rights and international humanitarian law in conflict zones; and protection of the rights of the most vulnerable people, such as women, children and persons with disabilities.

79. Mozambique was preparing a strategic plan on preventing and combating trafficking in persons, a national plan on disability and an action plan on protection against gender-based violence. Nevertheless, Mozambique still had challenges to overcome, such as the need to improve the human rights situation of the most vulnerable people in Cabo Delgado Province.

80. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Türkiye) said that, as a party to core international human rights treaties, Türkiye aimed to comply fully with its international obligations even in the face of grave security threats and terrorism. The launch of a new action plan on human rights in March 2021 was a testament to the country's commitment in the field of human rights.

81. Türkiye remained deeply concerned about the rise of xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and would host the next meeting of the Istanbul Process for Combating Intolerance, Discrimination and Incitement to Hatred and/or Violence on the Basis of Religion or Belief. States had a shared responsibility to promote mutual understanding. It was well known that fear stoked hatred towards "the other". Governments should not aggravate those fears. Whatever the driver might be, all migrants must be treated with dignity. The implementation of security measures without addressing the root causes of irregular migration and pushback practices that had no place in international humanitarian law would only lead to further human tragedies.

82. The military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine represented a gross violation of international law and was gravely endangering the human rights situation in the country. Türkiye affirmed its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, and for the Crimean Tatars' right to live freely and safely in their homeland.

83. While her Government respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China, it attached importance to the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Uighur Turks and other Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China and to the need to safeguard their cultural identities and religious freedoms. Türkiye welcomed the release of the OHCHR assessment report of human rights concerns in Xinjiang, which confirmed the concerns expressed by Türkiye and the international community. It was therefore important for the report's recommendations to be taken into account and implemented. Türkiye would continue to engage constructively with China and the international community to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Uighur Turks and other Muslim minorities in the region.

84. Human rights violations in Myanmar, including crimes against the Rohingya, remained a source of serious concern. The necessary steps to restore democracy should be taken without delay. The conditions of the Rohingya living in Myanmar must be improved and the efforts in pursuit of a viable solution to the Rohingya crisis must be continued.

85. Türkiye was disturbed by the increasing erosion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Afghanistan, in particular for women and girls, who had seen severe restrictions imposed on their access to education and other aspects of social life. Türkiye would continue to stand by the Afghan people to respond to their humanitarian needs and called for global efforts to that end.

86. The oppression by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories continued unabated. The people of Palestine deserved to live in freedom in their independent State within the 1967 borders.

87. The grave humanitarian crisis in Syria would continue unless the root causes were addressed and a political settlement was achieved in accordance with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). The regime must be held accountable for its crimes against humanity.

88. Lastly, the international community should take steps to investigate the atrocities amounting to war crimes that had been witnessed in Libya. Türkiye would continue to contribute to the reconciliation efforts of Libyans and to the Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process under the auspices of the United Nations.

89. **Ms. Flores Tello** (Panama) said that Panama focused its efforts on promoting and protecting the human rights of migrants and fostering a region of

solidarity and inclusiveness. It advocated shared responsibility, which allowed States to address the crisis affecting each migrant jointly and comprehensively.

90. Panama shared one of the world's most dangerous borders, the Darién Gap, with thousands of kilometres of jungle, rivers and steep mountains. Since 2009, more than 450,000 people had attempted to cross the border, with 199,972 having risked their lives in 2022 alone. The suffering and emotional cost of that human tragedy was immeasurable.

91. Panama allocated approximately \$40 million a year to the protection of the rights of migrants, ensuring reception services, basic health care, food, lodging and transfers between migration reception stations at both borders. It had created a mixed migratory flows management system that guaranteed the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migratory status, in line with the central approach of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. Inter-agency care units had also been created to ensure the rights and integrity of migrants. Transnational collaboration between police and investigative bodies ensured effective follow-up to crimes such as trafficking and smuggling of migrants.

92. Panama had been the first country to apply biometric identification measures, which it shared with the countries along the transcontinental migratory route, identifying those who had criminal records, including in relation to terrorism. Panama also offered universal access to health care, regardless of nationality or legal status. Likewise, education and social programmes, including those adopted to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, did not discriminate on the basis of nationality.

93. As a champion country of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Panama would continue to call for a humanitarian and responsibility-sharing approach to irregular migration involving, *inter alia*: the exchange of information between authorities; joint action between countries of origin, transit and destination, in accordance with international agreements that guaranteed the protection of the human rights of migrants; and humanitarian support from non-governmental organizations, financial institutions, the private sector and civil society.

94. **Mr. Mohamad** (Brunei Darussalam) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had exposed many fragilities in States' health-care, economic and social infrastructures and gaps in their collective ability to address global challenges. Alongside the immediate effects of COVID-19, States were witnessing a silent pandemic of mental health issues, the effects of which were worse for children and young people in conflict areas.

95. It was imperative for States to continue to promote mental health awareness and subsequently realize the right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standards of mental health. Brunei Darussalam noted with concern that people with mental health conditions might be subjected to social stigma and exclusion, discrimination, prejudice, violence, abuse and segregation. Mental health was an integral part of health and well-being and a significant determinant of quality of life that must be promoted by all levels of society. Brunei Darussalam had organized training and sharing sessions, consultations and roadshows to encourage its people to prioritize their mental health care through beneficial activities that could strengthen mental resilience. Moreover, it would continue to provide access to mental health care services, such as through a mental health crisis hotline administered by mental health advisors.

96. At the regional level, while chairing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2021, Brunei Darussalam had led work to advance the East Asia Summit Leaders' Statement on Mental Health Cooperation, which had been adopted in October 2021. In November 2021, Brunei Darussalam had co-chaired with Australia an East Asia Summit workshop on mental health, which had enabled the East Asia Summit participating countries to share their experiences and best practices on approaches to mental health. In 2022, Brunei Darussalam had also begun working on a joint action plan on mental health cooperation among East Asia Summit participating countries with the intention of promoting collective action for better mental health and well-being, particularly through ASEAN-led mechanisms.

97. **Ms. Morris Garrido** (Guatemala) said that it was of the utmost importance to address migration in a comprehensive manner, which was why her country called for full respect for the human rights of all people, regardless of their migratory status, and for special attention to be paid to groups in vulnerable situations such as women, children, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons. It was also essential to implement effective mechanisms for access to justice for migrants, including through coordinated solutions among all nations to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration flows. Moreover, as drought-related food insecurity in the dry corridor of Central America had left more than 3.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, it was imperative to ensure full respect for the environment, the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems and increased funding for adaptation and resilience.

98. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration represented an opportunity to improve the governance of migration and address the main challenges of human mobility with an approach based on respect for human rights. It was more necessary than ever to join efforts aimed at preserving the dignity of migrants, as they were the ones who helped to boost economies in countries of origin and destination by contributing to their economic, cultural and social development. Guatemala was reporting on the progress made by its national institutions in meeting the objectives of the Global Compact, taking into account the fact that efforts had been made in recent years to promote safe, orderly and regular migration. Her Government continued to work towards institutional strengthening of consular assistance and protection, supporting migrants and promoting the respect, protection and fulfilment of their human rights.

99. **Mr. Leucă** (Republic of Moldova) said that the military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine had led to numerous human rights violations and waves of refugees escaping in search of security and protection. Since the beginning of the war, some 585,000 refugees, predominantly women and children, had entered the territory of the Republic of Moldova, with more than 77,000 remaining in the country.

100. The Republic of Moldova had firmly demonstrated its commitment to ensuring protection for those seeking refuge in the country by putting in place a legal framework to protect and integrate refugees and to ensure their access to the labour market, health services and the education system. Furthermore, it had prioritized combating trafficking in persons by adopting national policies and increasing its international commitments in that area. Moldova counted on strengthening international cooperation in that regard and expressed gratitude to the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict for their visits to the country.

101. The Republic of Moldova had increased its efforts to protect human rights through the promotion of justice reform and measures to combat corruption and money-laundering and by focusing on new priorities, such as overcoming the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on social rights. Having ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, his Government had made it a priority in treaty implementation to ensure a safe environment for all, with no gender discrimination, and, in the same vein, attached great importance to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and

peace and security. It also fully supported the universal periodic review and was in the follow-up process to the implementation of the recommendations made during the review.

102. The repression of human rights in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova committed by the regime in Tiraspol, including forced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detentions and restrictions on freedom of expression and the media, remained of deep concern. It was alarming that the Tiraspol regime continued to ignore international appeals to cease its human rights violations. The Republic of Moldova counted on the active support and involvement of relevant international human rights structures and mechanisms to encourage the regime in Tiraspol to curb the cases of political pressure on dissenting voices and illegal detentions and convictions.

103. **Ms. Webster** (Australia) said that her country had been a long-standing champion of human rights and was proud to have been one of eight nations to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and an original signatory. Australia had ambitions of a more sustainable, peaceful and stable world for future generations, in line with the Charter of the United Nations. Presently there were 1.8 billion people between the ages of 10 and 24 – making up the largest generation of youth in history. They were coming of age in an ever more challenging environment, where the impacts of conflict, food insecurity and climate change undermined progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the fulfilment of universal human rights. Australia therefore welcomed the recent establishment of the United Nations Youth Office, which underscored the critical role youth played in human rights, peace and development.

104. Close to 90 per cent of the world's youth lived in developing countries, where they made up a "youth bulge". Over 60 per cent lived in the Asia-Pacific region. As a group that would be most directly impacted if States failed in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it was crucial to listen to their voices. Increasingly connected online, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people wanted to contribute to solutions to global challenges and to the development of their communities. States should ensure that youth could participate actively in global development discussions, which formed a collective vision of minimum living standards for all.

105. Youth were living on the frontline of climate change, with youth climate advocates like Seed, an Indigenous Australian movement for climate justice, providing a strong voice on that urgent global challenge. Youth activism was critically important in the Pacific,

where climate change remained the single greatest threat to peoples' livelihoods, security and well-being. The voices of Pacific climate activists needed to be amplified, including in multilateral forums, so that solutions could be found. Australia recognized and encouraged initiatives to that end, such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General's Young Climate Leaders Alliance.

106. Youth were at the forefront of advocacy on the global abolition of the death penalty. The theme of the 2022 World Congress against the Death Penalty had focused on youth. It was critically important to amplify the voices of death penalty survivors, including youth, to bring an end to that brutal and inhumane punishment.

107. **Mr. Manyanga** (Zimbabwe) said that his country believed in universality, impartiality, non-selectivity and non-politicization in the promotion and protection of human rights, and that all rights should be treated on equal terms, including economic rights. When gaps were identified, dialogue was the best way forward in helping States that were falling behind to promote and protect the fundamental rights of their citizens. Confrontation and finger-pointing never helped, and country-specific reports and the resulting resolutions did not serve their purported purpose as they advanced narrow political agendas and engendered resistance, division and animosity. Zimbabwe had confidence in the existing peer-to-peer review mechanisms, including the African Peer Review Mechanism and the universal periodic review. In January 2022, Zimbabwe had presented its third peer review report to the Human Rights Council, and the Council had adopted the outcome of the review in July 2022.

108. The credibility of the human rights treaty bodies was at stake, and concerted efforts were required to restore the integrity of those noble institutions, which were key to the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights. Zimbabwe therefore reiterated the need to protect the treaty bodies from those who wished to manipulate them for their narrow political ends.

109. **Ms. Le Duc Hanh** (Viet Nam) said that the international community must uphold multilateralism, strengthen solidarity and cooperation, respond jointly to global challenges and secure world peace, the fundamental premise for the protection and promotion of human rights. All human rights should be treated on an equal footing with greater emphasis on economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development, in particular.

110. Viet Nam supported the principles of independence, sovereignty, non-interference in other

countries' internal affairs, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicization with respect to human rights. It considered dialogue and cooperation to be the best way of addressing all issues relating to human rights and ensuring a better life and dignity for all. In that context, it had held bilateral dialogues with interested partners in order to learn and share experiences related to the promotion of human rights.

111. Investment in human capabilities and basic infrastructure was critical, particularly in times of crises, as it helped people to improve their livelihoods and well-being, build resilience against future shocks and achieve their full potential. At the national level, economic growth and recovery strategies should be comprehensive and inclusive to ensure equal access to basic services and infrastructure, in particular access to quality education and lifelong learning, health-care services, social protection and decent employment. At the international level, developed countries and United Nations organizations should provide developing countries with more assistance in terms of financing, expertise and capacity-building.

112. Her Government had continued to undertake human rights-related legal reform, develop national institutions and policies and ensure the effective implementation of national programmes and strategies that prioritized the protection of vulnerable groups, especially older persons, persons with disabilities and children with special conditions. It aimed to achieve social progress and equality, preserve cultural values and protect the environment while promoting sustainable and inclusive development. That holistic approach had enabled the country to effectively tackle challenges and achieve significant progress. As a result, Viet Nam ranked 115 in the human development index and the percentage of poor households in the country had dropped by 5 per cent. Gross domestic product growth had been forecasted to surge to 7.2 per cent in 2022 while inflation was projected to average 3.8 per cent over the year. In addition, Viet Nam was among the countries with the highest vaccination rates.

113. **Mr. Nunes** (Timor-Leste) said that the recent ratification by his country of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities marked another step taken to promote, protect and guarantee the full and equal enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms by all persons with disabilities and respect for their inherent dignity.

114. The proxy war in Ukraine was a matter of deep concern, notably the collateral damage being done to the fundamental rights of older persons, children, women

and girls. Timor-Leste called on all parties to the conflict to settle the problem through peaceful means.

115. The conflict in Yemen had displaced more than 1 million people and had given rise to cholera outbreaks, medicine shortages and famine. In addition, the famine situation in South Sudan remained dire across the country – 75 per cent of the population was facing severe food insecurity. The international community needed to take action to address the suffering of the people in those countries.

116. Concerned by the deteriorating situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, Timor-Leste called for an immediate end to all human rights violations and full respect for human rights in the country. Timor-Leste was also concerned by the political and human rights situation in Myanmar and urged the relevant parties to effectively and fully implement the ASEAN five-point consensus.

117. As climate change was having an adverse effect on the full enjoyment of human rights, including the right to life, water and sanitation, food, health, housing and development, it was important for States to have an obligation to prevent the foreseeable adverse effects of climate change and to ensure that those affected were protected. Timor-Leste had been experiencing massive floods, droughts, landslides, fires and extreme wind events. In addition, the rising sea level was causing coastal erosion that was damaging infrastructure and other assets. The impacts of climate change had led to a decrease in agricultural production, food insecurity, water shortages, destruction of infrastructure, loss of human life and biodiversity and human displacement.

118. **Mr. Aryal** (Nepal) said that the Constitution of Nepal incorporated the basic principles of the universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms and guaranteed a new set of rights, including the right to live in a clean and healthy environment, the right to food, the right to social security and rights specific to senior citizens, children, women and girls. As the Constitution guaranteed a level of representation of women of at least 33 per cent in federal and provincial parliaments and 40 per cent at the local level, their participation had increased significantly in politics and other spheres of national life. The Constitution fully empowered women to enjoy their right to lineage and equal rights in family matters and property, and guaranteed the right of sexual minorities to participate in State bodies on the basis of the principle of inclusivity. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity was punishable by law.

119. The sexual and reproductive health rights of every woman and girl were firmly recognized by law. Sexual

violence, polygamy, child, early and forced marriage, sexual harassment in the workplace and sexual and domestic violence were strictly punishable by law, as were trafficking in persons, domestic violence and discrimination on the basis of class, caste, region, language, religion and gender. Nepal had always prioritized protection of the rights of migrant workers, including women migrant workers.

120. As an independent constitutional body, the National Human Rights Commission had been working as a powerful watchdog to protect and promote human rights in Nepal. It had been accredited as an “A” category institution and fully complied with the Paris Principles. The Commission exercised a wide range of investigatory, supervisory, directive and recommendatory powers for the promotion and protection of human rights.

121. Having pioneered the implementation of a national human rights action plan in 2004, Nepal was carrying out the fifth series of the action plan for the period 2020–2025, an integral part of which was the implementation and follow-up of recommendations from universal periodic reviews and treaty bodies. Nepal had presented its third cycle of the universal periodic review in 2021.

122. Nepal fully upheld the values enshrined in international and regional treaties and conventions. As a member of the Human Rights Council for the second consecutive term, Nepal actively engaged in the Council’s work in an objective, balanced and apolitical manner. It also attached great importance to the work of the special procedure mandate holders and had welcomed the visit of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights to Nepal in 2021. Nepal had remained constructively engaged with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and had fulfilled its reporting obligations. In 2022, Nepal had presented its sixth and seventh periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ([CRC/C/NPL/6-7](#)).

123. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that terrorism and unilateral coercive measures had had a very negative impact on electricity projects in his country. Sanctions had halted banking relationships and insurance companies had stopped dealing with Syrian institutions. Some financial institutions had declined to fulfil their obligations to fund energy projects. The sanctions also meant that foreign companies were reluctant to provide loans or to enter into arrangements because of the difficulty of opening lines of credit. Foreign exporters of electrical equipment were not presenting tenders to provide the materials needed to

repair electrical grids damaged by sabotage or attacks. It was difficult to obtain spare parts for power stations and to import fuel in the necessary quantities. The flow of investment for the construction of traditional and renewable energy plants had declined. Furthermore, the sharp fall in the value of the lira had led to a decline in electricity generation and distribution.

124. The war and coercive measures posed enormous challenges for the electricity sector. Reconstruction required energy, but the efforts of the Syrian Government and its United Nations partners to improve the humanitarian situation of the Syrian people were hampered by the politicization by Western donors of humanitarian aid, the illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian people by the United States and the European Union, the continuation of foreign occupation and the obstruction by terrorist organizations of the delivery of humanitarian aid.

125. The full implementation of Security Council resolution [2642 \(2022\)](#), including with respect to early recovery projects, would constitute progress. Obstructing the delivery of aid to the Syrian people, the politicization of humanitarian work and the refusal by donor countries to fulfil their obligations to fund humanitarian response plans in Syria were not helpful. His delegation looked forward to more cooperation in implementing that resolution and in ascertaining how to bridge existing gaps.

126. **Ms. Narváez Ojeda** (Chile) said that, in a world in which the protection of human rights was being relativized and violated on a daily basis, it was more important than ever to affirm the universal nature of human rights, which benefited from the promotion of democracy, dialogue, cooperation and solidarity. Chile was deeply committed to democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Its commitment to multilateralism prioritized the search for consensus on matters of common interest, and it would work towards that outcome in the Committee and in the Human Rights Council. Chile was convinced that the universal nature of human rights strengthened the preventive capacity of the multilateral system, which in turn benefited from the participation of civil society, the private sector, academia and all relevant stakeholders. The Committee had a particular responsibility to give impetus to international cooperation in view of the centrality of human rights for the multilateral agenda.

127. Her Government was committed to pursuing formal and substantive equality for women in all their diversity and to seeking the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination. Similarly, Chile chaired the Group of Friends of Older Persons in order to effectively

bridge the legal gap that existed in the effective enjoyment of their human rights, which was evidenced by the fact that they were one of the groups most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

128. The extreme violence and discrimination still faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons was another issue of great importance. Same-sex marriage had been approved in Chile in 2021, which gave same-sex couples equal access to civil unions, and the first non-binary identification card in the country's history had been issued on 14 October 2022.

129. During its membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2023–2025, Chile would promote the development of the human right to a clean and healthy environment, which was an area in which Chile was working in various ways through a policy that defended biodiversity and oceans, including the impact on children and adolescents, as had been raised in Chile by such important bodies as the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. Chile wished to honour the trust placed in it by the international community by promoting understanding of the vital importance of effectively strengthening that fundamental pillar of the Organization.

130. **Mr. Dai Bing** (China) said that his country unremittingly pursued respect and protection of human rights, upheld a human rights philosophy that placed people front and centre and committed itself to realizing a happy life for all as the greatest human right. Over the past decades, the human rights course in China had undergone an historic transformation and had actively contributed to the progress of human rights worldwide. Having lifted nearly 100 million rural poor out of absolute poverty, China had achieved the poverty reduction targets set out in the 2030 Agenda 10 years ahead of schedule. Moreover, China was home to the largest education, social security and health-care systems, where peoples' enjoyment of human rights had seen significant improvements. While actively promoting global human rights governance, China had been elected as a member of the Human Rights Council three times and was committed to promoting multilateralism and upholding justice.

131. On the global stage, China opposed hegemonism and interference in internal affairs and spoke out on behalf of developing countries in defence of justice. It was his Government's goal to build China into a prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious country and it would continue to pursue the well-being of the Chinese people and the progress of human society.

132. The Committee was a platform for dialogue and cooperation rather than an arena for confrontation and division. Member States needed fairness and justice rather than condescending lectures on human rights. A handful of countries, including the United Kingdom, Czechia and other States members of the European Union, were abusing the Committee by stoking confrontation and deliberately politicizing and instrumentalizing human rights issues in an attempt to interfere in other countries' internal affairs. They maliciously attacked China on issues related to Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet in order to create chaos in the country. Such manipulations were doomed to fail.

133. The accusations of so-called crimes against humanity in Xinjiang were a flat out lie. Over the past 60 years, the Uighur population in Xinjiang had grown from 2.2 million to about 12 million, and the life expectancy had increased from 30 years to 74.7 years. While a handful of countries had hyped up the so-called OHCHR assessment report of human rights concerns in Xinjiang, States had seen through their attempts at coercive diplomacy. The so-called assessment did not have a legal mandate, nor did it have the consent of the country concerned or facts to support its claims and, as such, was totally illegal and invalid. The Human Rights Council had rejected the draft resolution on Xinjiang submitted by the United States and a number of other countries and had refused to recognize the so-called assessment by OHCHR, which represented a victory for truth and for all developing countries. The success of the "one country, two systems" policy in Hong Kong, China, was widely recognized, with the Special Administrative Region having entered a new phase of prosperity. Tibet had been following a promising path from backwardness to progress, from poverty to prosperity and from autocracy to democracy. No matter how hard they tried, that handful of States could never stand in the way of the confident progress made by China.

134. While constantly bringing up human rights conditions in developing countries, the United Kingdom, the European Union, including Czechia, and a handful of other countries never reflected on their own poor track record on human rights, which was a glaring example of hypocrisy and double standards. Those countries should reflect seriously on their own issues of serious racial discrimination, xenophobia, violations of the rights of refugees and migrants and abuses of Indigenous children and pursue accountability and reparation. Furthermore, they should immediately cease their use of unilateral coercive measures, stop creating human-made humanitarian catastrophes and condemn their allies for their serious human rights violations.

China stood ready to pursue human rights dialogue and cooperation on the basis of equality and respect.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

135. **Mr. Kim** Nam Hyok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation totally rejected all allegations made by the representative of the European Union as a political provocation and hostile act aimed at infringing upon the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and undermining its social system. The so-called human rights issues fabricated by hostile forces such as the European Union had never existed and could not be allowed to exist in his country. The accusations had nothing to do with the protection of human rights and were the impure product of a political plot only seeking to tarnish the image of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In reality, the European Union was fraught with serious human rights violations, such as racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, sexual violence and discrimination against ethnic groups and minorities, and it should address the serious human rights issues on its own land, rather than taking issue with non-existent issues in other countries.

136. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the representative of the European Union, in her statement of that morning, had used the term "regime" when describing his country. His delegation had not raised a point of order at that time because it had wanted to avoid any appearance of intending to disrupt the proceedings. The name of his country was clearly the Syrian Arab Republic. For those who seemed to have lost their ability to see, the name was written in bold letters in front of him. He represented the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic, a founding member of the Organization, and his delegation should be addressed accordingly. His delegation relied on the Chair to ensure that all Member States abided by the rules of communication and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The last time he had checked, that Organization had been called the "United Nations", not the "United regimes".

137. He wished to assure delegations that if they did not hear their countries mentioned in that statement of the European Union, they might find it the version uploaded to e-delegate. It was strange that all of the countries accused by the representative of the European Union of committing human rights violations were countries that had political differences with the European Union, particularly when it came to foreign policy, which gave the impression that the statement was politicized. For those delegations that had not heard the statement of the European Union, he would summarize it, as it was

simple: the European Union was right, and others were wrong. All those undertaking to improve the lives of their people were not doing enough and should be criticized, while the European Union was above criticism.

138. It was instructive to compare the statements of the European Union and the Holy See on the subject of the death penalty. The latter had supported the non-application of the death penalty as a defence of human dignity. Meanwhile, the representative of the European Union had given itself the right to issue orders to Belarus, another Member State. The European Union had urged Belarus to abolish the death penalty and, as a first step, to suspend executions. That was a clear example of what was happening in the Committee. The representative of the European Union had levelled a number of arbitrary accusations against other countries, including his. In that context, he wished to recall the proverb that 100 rabbits did not make up a horse and 100 claims did not make up a proof.

139. Delegations should review the statement of the representative of Singapore, delivered that morning, from which much could be learned. He had said that his country did not claim that its model was perfect and did not assume that it had a monopoly on wisdom, but that it remained open to learning from others and sharing its experiences. He had said that, at the end of the day, each country had to decide for itself what was best for it in the light of its own unique circumstances.

140. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Türkiye) said that the representative of Greece, earlier that morning, had presented a selective, one-sided interpretation of history and the present state of affairs. In 1963, Turkish Cypriots had been forced out of the government institutions and legislative and judiciary bodies of Cyprus, and the atrocities committed against them were well documented. Consequently, in 1964, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus had been deployed. Over the next 10 years, 180,000 Turkish Cypriots had been displaced and forced to live in scattered enclaves. The only occupation on the island, therefore, was the 58-year-long occupation by the Greek Cypriot administration.

141. The Turkish Cypriot authorities were making every effort to facilitate the work of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus. Hundreds of Turkish Cypriots had gone missing in the period from 1963 to 1974. Attempts to exploit a humanitarian issue for political propaganda purposes undermined the excellent work of the Committee. Türkiye had contributed \$1.5 million to the Committee since 2006.

142. To address the cultural heritage issues, Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots had established a joint technical committee, which had carried out several significant projects related to the sites on both sides of the island.

143. Varosha lay within the borders of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The steps taken by the Turkish Cypriot authorities were aimed at benefiting the former owners of property in Varosha. Some Greek Cypriot former inhabitants of Varosha supported the ongoing process, as it would allow them to reclaim their property or receive some form of remedy. The immovable property commission in charge of considering property claims in Varosha provided an effective domestic remedy for such claims and was recognized by the European Court of Human Rights. Any steps taken by the Turkish Cypriot authorities would not infringe on property rights in Varosha.

144. Lastly, Türkiye fully supported the proposals by the Turkish Cypriot leadership aimed at establishing a structured cooperative relationship with the Greek Cypriot side following the acknowledgment of the inherent sovereign equality and equal international status of the two sides.

145. The baseless allegations made by the Greek Cypriot administration would be answered by its Turkish Cypriot counterpart, whose voice unfortunately could not be heard in the Committee.

146. **Ms. Demosthenous** (Cyprus) said that it was important to accord respect to all Member States and to address them by their proper names. Cyprus was the only recognized State on the island. The human rights violations in Cyprus undeniably stemmed from the invasion and ongoing occupation by Türkiye. The attempts by Türkiye to distort historical reality in relation to its invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and its ongoing illegal occupation of the island were deeply regrettable and extremely provocative. The claim of isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community was nothing more than a euphemism for the recognition of a separatist entity that was the fruit of aggression and had been condemned by the Security Council. The international community was aware that Türkiye had wrought havoc on the island, displaced a third of the population, implemented its plans for partition and consolidated a new *fait accompli*. The pinnacle of the Turkish provocation was its insistence on imposing a two-State solution on Cyprus. Nothing in the Treaty of Guarantee could be construed as allowing or legitimizing the use of force by one State against another. The circumstances and conditions under which the Security Council could authorize the use of

force were clearly laid out in the Charter of the United Nations.

147. A large number of Cypriots were still missing. Türkiye must provide the information in its military archives regarding their fate and whereabouts, and refrain from politicizing that purely humanitarian issue by withholding information that could bring much-needed closure for the families of the victims.

148. Lastly, the Government of Türkiye was continuing with its plans to reopen Varosha in utter defiance of Security Council resolutions and presidential statements. Such plans constituted a clear manifestation of the deliberate policy to undermine the prospect of resuming negotiations and reaching a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem on the agreed basis as prescribed in Security Council resolutions.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.