



General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
13 October 2023

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 28 September 2023, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Marschik (Austria)
later: Ms. Banaken Elel (Vice-Chair) (Cameroon)

Contents

Agenda item 24: Social development (*continued*)

- (a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)
- (b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Management Section (dms@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

23-18478 (E)



Please recycle



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

Agenda item 24: Social development (continued)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (continued) (A/78/211 and A/78/236)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family (continued) (A/78/134, A/78/157, A/78/187, A/78/188, A/78/189 and A/78/331)

1. **Mr. Ladeb** (Tunisia), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had highlighted and exacerbated inequalities between countries and communities, reversing recent social gains and pushing more people into poverty or extreme poverty. Social development was being further undermined by cascading crises, including climate-related emergencies and natural disasters. In that light, the Group applauded the political declarations of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (Sustainable Development Goals Summit) and the high-level meetings on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response; universal health coverage and the fight against tuberculosis. National health systems and health structures created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic must be strengthened to respond effectively to future threats and emergencies.

2. Social justice for all was foundational. Climate change was the defining issue of the era, and further technological research and innovation was imperative to confront the crisis. The Group urged development partners to facilitate the transfer of relevant technologies to developing countries, most of which were in Africa. It called for full implementation of the Paris Agreement and for commitment to a low-carbon, climate-resilient environment. States must strive to limit the global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius.

3. In an increasingly interconnected world, global challenges required global solutions based on strong multilateral actions. The proposed world social summit would provide an opportunity to build political will, commitment and partnerships for such purposes and to review gaps and progress in implementing the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

4. The Group reaffirmed the commitment to quality education embodied in Agenda 2063: The Africa We

Want, and in the African Union Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025. Ensuring that every child had access to quality, supportive education would not only help to make the world fit for children; it would also promote the inclusive development of competent human capital. Learning structures must be reshaped to benefit all children everywhere, including children with disabilities. That would require exploring new ways of learning, fostering genuine collaboration, channelling local experience and knowledge, and closing the digital divide.

5. The Group was concerned that the informal sector continued to dominate employment opportunities in Africa. The international community should promote inclusive market access for products in which African countries had a comparative advantage. The Group supported financing for development in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. It called on its partners to fulfil their commitments on global warming, including through official development assistance (ODA) and other development programmes.

6. It was time to place people at the centre of development and to make poverty eradication, full employment and social integration the overriding development objectives. The international community must work together to promote an inclusive and cohesive social perspective on development based on equity, social justice and non-discrimination, in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

7. **Ms. Tonon** (Italy) said that conflicts, climate change and rising inequalities compelled action to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Social inclusion was key in that process. Policies must be designed to deepen solidarity and address the situation of the most vulnerable, placing human rights at the centre of development and leveraging the opportunities created by technology. Italy welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to convene a world social summit in 2025 and commended the outcomes of the sixty-first session of the Commission for Social Development (see A/78/211) and also the report of the Secretary-General on promoting social integration through social inclusion (A/78/188), particularly its emphasis on gender equality.

8. To promote equal opportunities at the national level, Italy had strengthened its policies on motherhood and families, work-life balance and childcare, and it was implementing disability reforms to promote inclusion, full participation in education, training, and work

opportunities for persons with disabilities. Cognizant of the need to invest in youth, Italy commended the decision of the General Assembly to establish the United Nations Youth Office. It was also a staunch supporter of the United Nations Youth Delegate Programme.

9. **Mr. Di Capua** (Italy), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people were dismayed by climate change and its impact on their fundamental rights. They would bear its full consequences throughout their lives, yet they had almost no voice at the multilateral table. Intergenerational leadership was essential to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. Climate action could be used not only to address poverty and gender inequality, which affected young people, but also to educate and empower them. It was time to establish centrally funded, transnational structures to build the leadership capacity of young people, especially those in the global South.

10. **Ms. Benson** (Poland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the bloody war launched by the Russian Federation had transformed Europe. In an hour of trial, young Poles had risen unbidden to the challenge of assisting Ukrainians fleeing for their lives. But while the illegal and unjustified Russian aggression against Ukraine had showed the strength of new generations, it had also revealed the fragility of the interconnected global system, disrupting supply chains and creating food insecurity and energy shortages.

11. Breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and hunger could take generations without outside help. The price for the benefits of global interconnectedness was responsibility for the planet and its people. Member States must come together to act collectively for the benefit of every person on the planet. Moreover, older generations must not forget the price young people were paying for mistakes that were not theirs, which grew with every bullet fired, every ton of greenhouse gases emitted and every missed opportunity to invest in education or include young people in dialogue on national policies. As the first generation brought up entirely in the digital era, young people could offer creative, cutting-edge solutions, but they needed help to be able to join in the discussion. Member States should follow the example of Poland by establishing strong youth councils, and the United Nations should promote the creation of youth advisory boards in its specialized agencies as well as in Member States. In addition, all States should eliminate the barriers preventing girls and women from achieving their full potential and should establish institutions to ensure compliance with gender equality standards.

12. **Ms. Umulisa** (Rwanda) said that sustainable economic growth was the foundation of social progress. Thanks to a people-centred, inclusive approach to economic growth, Rwanda had achieved a remarkable decline in multidimensional poverty, near universal primary school enrolment and health-care coverage, and one of the lowest under-5 mortality rates in Africa. It was currently implementing policies and strategies to promote disability inclusion, including by forging partnerships on disability inclusion initiatives. To empower Rwandan youth, her Government was investing in education and vocational and skills training, had established youth civic participation mechanisms and had set up a programme to connect young people with employment opportunities or entrepreneurial prospects. Social development should promote equal opportunities for all by giving traditionally underrepresented groups a voice at the decision-making table.

13. **Ms. Hellerová** (Czechia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the ambitious vision laid out in the 2030 Agenda was far from being realized. Without gender equality, sustainable development remained an elusive dream, yet at the current pace it would take hundreds of years to achieve. States should urgently allocate more resources to initiatives to empower women and girls and should mainstream gender considerations in all policies and initiatives. The Czech youth delegates emphasized the need for gender-responsive climate mitigation strategies and actions, given the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls, and called for concerted action to destigmatize menstruation and guarantee access to affordable menstruation products and comprehensive menstrual health education.

14. **Ms. Bulvasová** (Czechia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people must be equal partners in dialogue at all levels of government, as members of national youth consultative bodies and within civil society. The Czech youth delegates condemned ageism, “youth-washing” and the stigmatization of youth topics, and they applauded the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office. To ensure an integrated and comprehensive approach, youth must be systematically represented in solution-finding.

15. Quality education should be a priority. No one should be discriminated against on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, socioeconomic status, religion or disability, or left behind because of digital or technological divides. Young people needed future-oriented skills in, for example, critical thinking, entrepreneurship and problem-solving. With that in mind, education curricula should be revised to include subjects such as debate, mental health education,

comprehensive sexual education and education for active citizenship.

16. **Mr. Choong** (Singapore) said that, as a small country with limited natural resources, Singapore prioritized social and economic development. Its disability initiatives were grounded in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda. In 2022, Singapore had launched its fourth enabling masterplan, developed in concertation with persons with disabilities, and a first enabling services hub had recently been established to provide better local support for persons with disabilities and their caregivers.

17. To improve support for families, Singapore had doubled the number of preschool places in the past decade and had tripled the infant care workforce in the past five years. In addition, government-paid paternity leave would increase to four weeks beginning in January 2024.

18. To guarantee young Singaporeans a role in national policymaking, panels of 20 to 30 young people had been constituted to develop policy recommendations in concertation with Government policymakers. Singapore had also launched a national youth fund to support policy and ground-up initiatives.

19. Over the years, Singapore had introduced several support schemes for older persons, including cash supplements for low-income older Singaporeans with little or no family support, subsidies for assistive devices and home health-care items, and respite services for caregivers. In 2023, the national action plan for successful ageing had been revised to provide greater support for older persons, and older person-friendly traffic zones were currently being implemented.

20. **Ms. Santa Ana Vara** (Mexico) said that the current interrelated crises affected developing countries more severely and could not be overcome without ensuring progress, development and prosperity for all. Mexico took a rights-based approach to social development that emphasized well-being, inclusion and equity. Well-being policies and programmes were central to national efforts to eradicate poverty. Mexico strove to provide universal social protection for historically marginalized groups through economic support and direct cash transfers, and it was working to strengthen the agency and participation of young people in all their diversity, including through a youth work placement programme. All older Mexicans were entitled to a basic income. Mexico recognized the importance of families as the basic unit of society in strengthening social cohesion.

21. **Ms. Akanitvong** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her country fully supported the

United Nations commitment to elevate youth engagement, including through the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office. The successful outcome of Young and Future Generations Day during the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had demonstrated that young people could be leaders in promoting a sustainable future.

22. **Mr. Juntree** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people could build the connections required to achieve a sustainable future. In that respect, access to digital connectivity was no longer a luxury but a necessity, and young people must also be able to connect to education and employment. Governments should provide platforms where young people could connect digitally to create a coalition of like-minded young change-makers who would be the leaders of tomorrow.

23. Lastly, young people could promote sustainability and inspire pragmatic and creative solutions if Governments involved them in policymaking. The Thai youth delegates hoped that their voices and recommendations would be taken into account during the Summit of the Future and the proposed world social summit, which should stress youth leadership, youth connectivity and youth inspiration.

24. **Mr. Grünwald** (Slovakia) said that his Government attached particular importance to education and was currently rewriting the national curriculum. Internationally, much more should be done to provide adequate space for young people to contribute to the work of the United Nations. The ongoing establishment of the United Nations Youth Office was a step in the right direction.

25. **Mr. Beblavý** (Slovakia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Slovak young people cited educational opportunity, economic development, security and environmental sustainability as the country's most pressing concerns. Those were all matters addressed in the 2030 Agenda. States should pursue the Sustainable Development Goals relentlessly, and they should actively involve young people in their efforts. At the international level, the United Nations should further integrate the world's young people into decision-making processes by expanding or creating youth engagement programmes, and it should work closely with regional and nongovernmental organizations involved with youth. Deepening cooperation between young people and the United Nations would benefit all.

26. **Ms. Aviel** (Israel) said that sustainable development could not be achieved unless all segments of society were included. Israel continued to promote

the disability rights agenda domestically and internationally. At home, a cabinet-level disabilities commission ensured a whole-of-government approach, and internationally, the Israeli delegation had organized a side event on persons with disabilities in natural disasters and emergency situations during a recent session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. To protect the rights of older persons, Israel operated a call centre from which older persons could obtain information about their rights and available services. It also offered support for older persons seeking employment, preparing for retirement or in need of health-care assistance, and it had trained local focal points to ensure their social integration. Regarding young people, Israel welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office and continued to participate in the youth delegate programme.

27. **Mr. Lagdameo** (Philippines) said that people were at the heart of his country's development vision for 2040 and mid-term development plan for 2023–2028. The mid-term plan increased investment in infrastructure and digitalization and set out fiscal and tax reforms that would attract investment and speed growth, stimulating the creation of quality and green jobs, with the ultimate goal of elevating the Philippines to middle-income status.

28. His country's cash transfer programme reduced the vulnerabilities of children living in poverty by conditioning eligibility on school enrolment and health check-ups. In addition to offering free tertiary education at public institutions, the Philippines operated a variety of skills development and lifelong learning programmes, and it was open to partnering with international organizations or other States on education and skills development initiatives.

29. The mid-term development plan also provided for the specific needs of different vulnerable groups. The Philippines paid particular attention to the rights and welfare of migrant workers and called on other States to protect their labour rights and ensure safe working conditions for them. Ultimately, his country's development efforts would not succeed without a global environment in which all countries could thrive. The development agenda must take into account the interests of all developing countries, including middle-income countries.

30. **Mr. Huber** (Austria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that current events often left young people feeling discouraged and disillusioned. While social inequalities, uncertainties, crises and war concerned everyone, the younger generations were the most

vulnerable. Young people from all walks of life had a right to be heard and meaningfully included in decision-making processes at all levels. It was imperative to develop, adopt and implement youth, peace and security action plans at the national and regional levels and to meaningfully involve youth in all their diversity in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, post-conflict processes, humanitarian action and the development of peace and security frameworks. Similarly, young people should be meaningfully involved in all decision-making processes related to sustainable development, on which their future depended. The international community must build on the efforts, vision and experience of the many young people driving positive change and empower them to realize their full potential as change-makers.

31. He hoped that the newly established United Nations Youth Office would listen closely to young people, work especially with less privileged youth, uplift young people's voices globally, advocate for gender equality, provide and create resources and opportunities for the meaningful involvement of youth and help to place youth in global leadership positions. In the near term, young people must be fully involved in the process leading up to the Summit of the Future.

32. **Ms. Makgati** (South Africa) said that her delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal to convene a world social summit in 2025. Her country had not escaped the negative effects of the interconnected food, energy and finance crises, and its efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty had been reversed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, the focus was on recovery and on working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. South Africa distributed various forms of support to vulnerable groups within the population. For example, as of 2015, almost three quarters of older South Africans had been receiving social grants, which had significantly reduced the country's overall poverty rate. Her Government also promoted inclusive development through no-fee schools, a school nutrition programme, access to basic services and free or low-cost housing and through sports, cultural and recreational programmes.

33. **Ms. Mozgovaya** (Belarus) said that her Government's inclusive, people-centred social policy provided support for older persons, persons with disabilities, veterans, young families and families with children, with special attention to creating the conditions in which young people could realize their full potential. Belarus had a support system for older persons that ensured their full participation in public life and had taken measures to strengthen intergenerational solidarity by arranging joint activities for young and

older persons for the transmission of historical memory, the sharing of knowledge and collective solutions to critical problems. To promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, it was implementing a new law to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and enshrine the concept of inclusive education. Job quotas had been introduced for persons with disabilities, and sign language had been given official recognition. State social policy also aimed to support the traditional family, inculcate an appreciation of the institution of marriage, promote family life and responsible parenting, and create favourable conditions for balancing work and parenthood.

34. Her delegation regretted that, in the Secretary-General's report on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/78/211), unilateral coercive measures were not mentioned as a cause of food insecurity. Sanctions against Belarusian potash fertilizers were one of the main reasons for the surge in fertilizer prices and, thus, food prices. It was generally agreed that Belarusian potash could not be replaced in the near term. Given the global hunger crisis, those sanctions should be set aside.

35. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan) said that social development was a cause and consequence of economic growth, sustainable development, security and respect for human rights. The world was divided between the rich and the poor, the safe and the endangered, the free and the oppressed. Developing countries faced food, fuel and finance crises, exacerbated by climate change and proliferating conflicts. In that context, Pakistan welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to convene a world social summit in 2025. The modalities, title, objectives, scope and possible outcomes of the summit should be discussed and negotiated at the intergovernmental level. The summit should focus on the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and on the 2030 Agenda. Pakistan also fully endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal for a stimulus package to rescue developing countries in economic and financial distress.

36. It was vital to reform the international financial architecture and to contain the forces of corporate greed, global economic oligarchy, neonationalism and right-wing extremism. Member States must implement or enforce the commitments made at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda regarding debt, ODA, redistribution of unused special drawing rights, creation of new special drawing rights and increased concessional lending by multilateral development banks.

37. A global compact for economic and social development was urgently needed to set standards for operationalizing the right to development, social justice, equity, non-discrimination, common but differentiated responsibilities, social inclusion, people-centred social development, global solidarity and responsibility sharing, and for ending financial inequalities and developing sustainable social protection systems. The upcoming Summit of the Future accorded the opportunity to negotiate such a compact as part of A Pact for the Future.

38. **Ms. Squeff** (Argentina), noting the crucial role of the Commission on Social Development, said that Argentine public policies supported modern families in all their diversity as well as the human rights of all their members. Her country's many social programmes included plans to combat hunger and promote employment, enrichment and support programmes for children and adolescents, and programmes for persons with disabilities. Argentina reiterated its commitment to a rights-based social development agenda that promoted inclusive development and social justice for all. To provide the fiscal space needed to realize that agenda, it was essential to reform the international financial architecture, redistribute special drawing rights and eliminate surcharges. The International Monetary Fund would have an opportunity to eliminate those surcharges during its November 2023 conference on fiscal policy in an era of high debt.

39. A binding international instrument on the rights of older persons was urgently needed, as the older population was predicted to double by 2050. The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing provided a key multilateral space in which to promote and advance that agenda.

40. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that strengthening global governance through high-level meetings such as the upcoming Summit of the Future was essential to ensure equitable outcomes and prevent the marginalization of developing countries. The system of global governance should give developing countries an equal voice in shaping policies and decisions that affected them and should provide for fair trade practices as well as technology transfer and financial support mechanisms. It should also engage young people, whose fresh ideas could inspire innovative solutions to global issues.

41. Inequality, both within and between countries, had far-reaching social, economic and political implications; it undermined not only social cohesion and trust but also overall economic growth and stability. Climate justice demanded that the burden of addressing climate change be shared. Given their historical responsibility for the

major share of greenhouse gas emissions, the developed countries must take a leading role in aiding the most affected communities.

42. Namibia devoted a steadily growing portion of public spending to cash transfers and complementary social assistance for a range of vulnerable groups, including older persons. Since older persons were anchors within their communities, social safety nets for them were also a contribution to support for their extended families and sometimes even further.

43. **Mr. Dai Bing** (China) said that development should be front and centre in the international agenda. All countries must work together, mobilizing every sector, to create a robust synergy. China hoped that the international community would seize the opportunity of convening a world social summit in 2025 to reenergize efforts to attain the social development-related Sustainable Development Goals.

44. Development was an inalienable right of all countries and not the privilege of a few. The international community must categorically reject the reckless imposition of unilateral sanctions and technology blockades, as well as attempts to reframe economic and trade matters as security issues. It was essential to maintain value chain stability and to safeguard the right to development of developing countries, which should have a greater voice in global governance and should be accorded an environment conducive to development.

45. China took a people-centred approach to development. It had the world's largest education, social security and health-care systems and remained committed to distributing the dividends of development equitably and inclusively.

46. Health care, education, social security and other aspects of social development were integral to the 2030 Agenda, yet they were greatly underfunded. It was essential that developed countries deliver on their pledge of financial support to developing countries. A staunch supporter of international development, China had launched a global development initiative based on pragmatic cooperation that was already bearing fruit. A \$4 billion fund had been established to implement the initiative, with Chinese financial institutions providing an additional \$10 billion. China stood ready to work with all stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda and to build a community with a shared future.

47. **Ms. Zacarias** (Portugal), recalling the foundational promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, said that social development should be seen through a human rights lens. Her delegation called

on all States which had not yet done so to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its Optional Protocol. Portugal would spare no effort to ensure the success of the proposed world social summit, which should lay the foundation for a new social contract based on the idea that social protection in health, housing, education and employment must be guaranteed for all, including young people, older persons, women and migrants.

48. As a co-facilitator of the biennial draft resolution on policies and programmes involving youth, Portugal sought to ensure that the human rights of young people remained high on the United Nations agenda. Reiterating her country's strong support for the United Nations Youth Office, she said that the international community could not debate the world's most pressing problems without including the voices of those who would inherit them. Concrete and effective measures must be adopted to ensure the participation, engagement and leadership of diverse young people, without discrimination, and to support intergenerational dialogue.

49. Ageism remained a widespread and largely unrecognized problem. As a co-facilitator of the intergovernmental process to consider the existing international framework and identify possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them, Portugal would remain a constructive actor in the protection of those rights.

50. **Mr. Muhamed** (Malaysia) said that while the COVID-19 pandemic had widened inequalities, the post-pandemic recovery had opened a window of opportunity to redesign more inclusive, resilient and sustainable socioeconomic structures. His Government's policies on development and administration were guided by the fundamental principles of sustainability, prosperity, innovation, respect, trust and compassion. Malaysia had a plan in place for the period 2021–2025 to achieve equitable prosperity for women, youth, elderly persons, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities, crafted in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government had reviewed the plan to assess progress and to further accelerate socioeconomic development.

51. Malaysia had also revised its overarching social development policy to ensure that it included all Malaysians, based on the principles of productive welfare, gender equality and non-discrimination. It was also making efforts to enhance social protection for youth, women, persons with disabilities and elderly persons by strengthening policies, improving programme coordination and bolstering social security and retirement schemes.

52. A national policy and agenda had been introduced to ensure that elderly persons were not left behind. Further work was underway to formulate a roadmap centred on five clusters: economy, education, finance, health and well-being. Malaysia was also introducing legislation to promote social work, which was coupled with efforts to set practice and education standards, roll out registration and certification mechanisms, promote professional development and enhance the image of social work.

53. **Ms. Zalabata Torres** (Colombia) said that ending poverty in all its forms was the world's greatest challenge and a prerequisite to sustainable development. Her Government's actions remained in keeping with the agreements reached at the World Summit for Social Development and with the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development. In advocating income redistribution and ensuring that people historically left behind had real opportunities for education and employment, the Government had placed equality and social justice at the core of its development policies.

54. Ending poverty required a shift to a consistent and long-term development model that promoted sustainable production and consumption patterns, as pursued by the national development plan for the period 2022–2026. Colombia faced the challenge of implementing a modern social policy that guaranteed equal opportunities for all and contained social inclusion strategies to foster access to health services, child care, education, human capital formation, food security and decent work, thereby contributing to effective protection of human rights. The Government remained convinced of the importance of multilateral efforts to drive an agenda ensuring growth, prosperity and well-being for all.

55. *Ms. Banaken Elel (Cameroon), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

56. **Mr. Jensen** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, in the midst of persecution and conflict, women had lived with a real fear that their safety and human rights would be the last priority. Sexual violence had been wielded as a weapon against Syrian, Congolese and now Ukrainian women. The youth of Norway condemned Russian soldiers' use of sexual violence as a method of warfare in Ukraine.

57. Sexual violence left marks on its victims long after the conflicts had ended, thereby inhibiting progress and preventing girls from participating in public life. The youth of Norway called upon the United Nations to turn the words of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and other United Nations resolutions into action and to hold criminals of war accountable.

58. **Ms. Stokke** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, said that women's rights and girls' futures should be secured. The international community should recognize that women were not only victims, but also valuable resources. Education for women and girls should be prioritized as the key to the solution for many existing challenges. She called on the United Nations to reflect on how the Sustainable Development Goals were to be met without the participation of half of the world's population in decision-making.

59. Investing in education for girls enabled them to become agents of change. Treating girls as assets and providing them with quality education would unlock opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership. The youth of Norway urged the United Nations to prioritize and invest in women's safety and education to ensure a future for girls and a brighter and more sustainable world for all.

60. *Mr. Marschik (Austria) resumed the Chair.*

61. **Ms. Rizk** (Egypt) said that the Secretary-General's report was an alarm call regarding the lack of sufficient action on the sustainable development agenda. Particularly alarming was the lack of progress on and even reversal of measures taken to address extreme poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, and the lack of access to quality education and energy sources, both as public services and as human rights. Still recovering from the misappropriation of natural resources, conflict, heavy debt burdens, the lack of access to markets and the lack of a fair global trade system, developing and least-developed countries in Africa were the most affected. The lack of progress disproportionately affected women and girls, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, particularly children. As solutions to existing challenges, green and digital economies left some economies behind and exacerbated intergenerational, social and economic inequalities. Highly interlinked and interdependent, the various focus areas in the report necessitated a collective, international response.

62. While recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic had been uneven and difficult, developed countries should nevertheless allocate funds to finance development and widen the pool of partnerships for development in both climate action and development. However, the necessary complementarity between national and international action in those areas had not been addressed in the report.

63. As regards ageing, a uniform approach disregarded the demographic differences between developed and developing societies. In Egypt, youth represented 60 per cent of the population. While the specific needs of elderly persons should be addressed,

policies must adequately respond to demographics and specifically target youth. Drafting a legally binding instrument to address the rights of elderly persons would lead to further fragmentation of human rights.

64. Egypt had launched two key projects for social development. The first comprehensively addressed various issues relating to an adequate standard of living while reducing poverty and targeting communities in remote rural areas, thus raising social protection floors. Recognizing the family as the cornerstone for social development and the importance of a safe environment for children and youth, and also care and support for elderly persons, the second project was premised on demographic data collection, monitoring the impact of implemented policies, culture, awareness-raising and education.

65. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the family was the building block of society, and her country therefore recognized the importance of protecting and empowering families. Their contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals must be addressed, and policymakers must assess whether their future policies work for families and whether their family policies work for the future.

66. Iran strived to implement family-oriented policies aimed at, inter alia, the empowerment of women and girls, particularly women heads of households and rural women and girls. Its plans and programmes targeted family welfare by facilitating new businesses and entrepreneurial initiatives, providing social protection plans, cash transfers and subsidies to those in need, and offering housing loans to support young and large families.

67. Fully aware of youth's capacity and in view of the importance of the United Nations Youth Office, her country sought to create opportunities for access to quality education, employment, decent work and vocational skills. To promote youth engagement in the economy, Iran fostered entrepreneurship programmes, supported youth-led enterprises and promoted job creation, which would reduce poverty and inequality and encourage empowerment and self-reliance.

68. Unilateral coercive measures negatively affected the enjoyment of human rights by elderly persons, persons with disabilities, youth, women and children in Iran and other targeted countries. Iran urged the international community to end those illegal and inhumane measures.

69. Her delegation considered that family issues were marginalized in the work of the Organization and called on the United Nations system, particularly the

Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to refocus its attention on family issues while taking into consideration migration and intergenerational dialogue.

70. **Ms. Niamba Congo** (Burkina Faso) said that Burkina Faso, in its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, was enacting policies to improve the well-being of its people. Aligned with that approach, the national plan for economic and social development and the stabilization and development action plan were particularly focused on vulnerable populations such as children, young people, women, elderly persons, persons with disabilities and internally displaced persons.

71. With a population made up of 51.78 per cent children, 32.6 per cent young people, 51.7 per cent women and 5.1 per cent people aged 60 years and older, Burkina Faso faced a variety of related challenges exacerbated by the security and humanitarian situation in the country since 2015, including issues with access to basic social services, unemployment and underemployment, low levels of empowerment, lack of access to quality vocational training, the digital divide, low levels of participation in decision-making bodies, marginalization, discrimination and social exclusion. Massive population displacement, drastically reduced agricultural, animal and food production, and severely impaired health and education sectors had led to an across-the-board increase in needs relating to food, shelter and survival equipment, education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, and protection.

72. The Government continued to give particular attention to children, women and disadvantaged social groups, making efforts to ensure progress was made. A national strategy to help displaced persons and their host communities, together with a plan of action, was designed to contribute to the consolidation of peace, social cohesion and improved living conditions. Approximately 30 per cent of the cost of implementing the strategy had yet to be secured.

73. **Mr. Nascimento Dias** (Brazil) said that Brazil firmly believed that sustainable and inclusive economic growth was a prerequisite for social justice, decent jobs and improved standards of living for all. Wide-ranging in its scope, social development formed the basis for a just, prosperous and more egalitarian society.

74. With a view to eradicating poverty, Brazil had reinstated a family grant programme to provide financial aid to families for education and vaccinations for children. Understanding poverty as a multidimensional challenge, it was also committed to fair and inclusive labour relations and in 2023 had adopted measures such as an increase in the minimum wage and equal pay for equal work.

75. Brazil was also committed to upholding human rights and was adopting policies to address systemic inequalities, including racism, misogyny and discrimination, and to ensure justice for all. Its candidacy to the Human Rights Council was a key instrument for promoting such policies.

76. **Mr. Kashaev** (Russian Federation) said that social development was inconceivable without addressing the priorities of the 2030 Agenda, such as eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, eliminating hunger, fostering well-being and ensuring quality education. It was essential to continue work on specific measures to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

77. The Commission for Social Development was the key intergovernmental body for the discussion of social issues. The Russian Federation opposed any attempts to curtail the work of that forum, which had been working to develop agreed solutions on the issues of youth, older persons and persons with disabilities and to strengthen the institution of the family. Issues relating to the world social summit scheduled for 2025 should be discussed within the Commission for Social Development.

78. The Russian Federation paid special attention to caring for the older generation, as exemplified in a programme that had fostered elderly persons' participation in health, education and leisure activities both online and in person.

79. His Government based its youth policies on the key provisions of the World Programme of Action for Youth, with the main focus on helping young people find jobs and realising their cultural, sporting and creative potential. The World Youth Festival was scheduled to be held in Russia in 2024 to promote international youth cooperation, and 20,000 Russian and foreign young people were expected to participate.

80. Russian social policy also prioritized the defence of traditional values, as set out in a decree issued in November 2022. With a view to preserving and strengthening traditional Russian spiritual and cultural values, the importance of a strong family and of intergenerational continuity was emphasized.

81. **Mr. Gulov** (Tajikistan) said that Tajikistan had made significant strides in aligning its national strategies and policies with the Sustainable Development Goals. Some of the challenges in that process had been described in his country's voluntary national review report presented to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2023.

82. A national programme of targeted social assistance had been launched, and a national register of low-income families and persons with disabilities had been

developed to bolster the social protection system. The poverty rate had fallen over the period 2015–2022. Tajikistan had taken up a number of recommendations received during the third cycle of the universal periodic review, including strengthening the legal and public policy framework for a healthy, clean and sustainable environment and ensuring the meaningful participation of women, children, persons with disabilities and local communities in respect of climate change and disaster risk reduction. With a large youth population, Tajikistan was cognizant of the importance of youth engagement in the management of public affairs.

83. Tajikistan was also committed to vulnerable populations. It had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and adopted a number of strategies to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. In addition, the Government had adopted a number of measures aimed at mitigating the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19.

84. **Ms. Rivera Reyes** (Honduras) said that Honduras faced significant social development challenges. Out of an estimated population of 9.7 million people, 1.4 million were girls and 3.5 million were women. Adolescents and young people accounted for 29.8 per cent, Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent for 8.6 per cent, people aged 65 years and older for 6 per cent and people with disabilities for 12–14 per cent of the population.

85. In line with the 2030 Agenda, the Government had framed public strategies in several main areas, including the construction of a statistics-based social agenda targeting social protection, the creation of asset-based social programmes, the creation of three food and nutrition voucher programmes and the creation of a solidarity fund to provide a pool of resources for people with disabilities so as to finance innovative sustainable development projects.

86. **Ms. Savova** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the tremendous challenges that society faced, such as climate change, poverty, inequality and conflicts, provided an opportunity to unite as a global community, rebuild trust and reignite the flames of solidarity. Meeting the Goals of the 2030 Agenda required a trusting, collective and global effort in which youth played an integral part as both stakeholders and advocates in building their own future. While trust had been eroded, it could be rebuilt by listening and identifying the root causes.

87. **Ms. Garelova** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young Bulgarians were alarmingly unaware of the Sustainable Development Goals and how they could contribute to them. While the environment

and sustainability formed part of school curriculums, students' general knowledge had not grown substantially, and teachers were sometimes disengaged. Educational approaches should not only raise students' awareness of the Goals, but also their understanding of the Goals' importance, how they could be met, the tools to maintain them after 2030 and the related institutions and organizations. Coordination was necessary to overcome wasted efforts and achieve the Goals before it was too late.

88. **Ms. Bin Jadid** (Saudi Arabia) said that the Basic Law of Governance stipulated that economic and social development should be accomplished according to a sound and just plan, and it also protected human rights, which guided the national development programme, Vision 2030. Grounded on the values of moderate Islam, national pride and the Saudi cultural heritage, Vision 2030 was a roadmap for sustainable development, the realization of economic, social and cultural benefits, the social and health protection system, and the reinforcement of the family as the cornerstone of society.

89. The Government had worked to enhance young people's autonomy through education, work and training on leadership for the future. Through various initiatives, it also sought to protect the rights of elderly persons and persons with disabilities. Efforts had also been made to improve housing quality and prices, and the Government had set a target of 70 per cent homeownership by 2030. It would continue to work in partnership with the United Nations and the international community to meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

90. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that the family merited particular protection as a basic unit of biological, social and cultural reproduction, especially at a time when the institution was facing significant challenges. Unfortunate events such as the loss of a spouse or the death of both parents sometimes led to changes in family structure, but such circumstances should never be promoted as the norm. Within the time-honoured institution of marriage, the fundamental role of the mother and the father in a child's upbringing should not be underestimated.

91. Attempts to diminish the importance of the family, undermine the authority of parents and legal guardians and promote the independence of children were particularly concerning in light of the description of the family in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as "the natural and fundamental group unit of society" that was "entitled to protection by society and the State".

92. Ahead of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024, all countries should consider the degree of protection granted to the family unit. Parents should have the right to choose the kind of education given to their children, especially in contexts in which comprehensive sexuality education was being imposed on young people without their parents' knowledge. Aware that children lacked the maturity to take decisions that would have an impact on the rest of their lives, the Government of Cameroon was working to safeguard parents' authority over and responsibility for their children. Every child needed a loving mother and caring father in order to grow up to be a balanced adult, able to help build a happy and prosperous society.

93. Cameroon would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the world social summit in 2025, which should reaffirm the family as a driver of development and strengthen family-based legislation and policies.

94. **Ms. Al-mashehari** (Yemen) said that the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024 represented an unprecedented opportunity to refocus on objectives associated with the family, paving the way for coordinated action among all stakeholders to improve the relevant policies and programmes.

95. The Houthi insurgency had sought to undermine national unity and the political transition initiated in 2014. Towns, neighbourhoods, and economic and civil infrastructure had been targeted, leaving over 3.5 million people internally displaced in the liberated governorates. In response to that challenge, as well as climate change and environmental disasters, the Government had in 2017 reactivated an entity to manage camps for displaced persons in the temporary capital, Aden, and was working tirelessly to rebuild infrastructure.

96. Given that young people would make up over 60 per cent of the Yemeni population in 2025, the Government had drawn up a national youth strategy. It was also committed to devising a comprehensive strategy for persons with disabilities, grounded in established rights, which would allow them to exercise their rights and shoulder their responsibilities, while ensuring that they received a fair share of resources. Those efforts were in line with the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and would have had a positive impact on the development of programmes for that segment of the population, had the coup by the terrorist Houthi militias not made that impossible. However, the Government had succeeded in introducing a national strategy covering all groups in society, including older persons, for 2022–2028.

97. Yemen thanked all countries that had helped it to cope with the repercussions of the humanitarian disaster and called upon all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to assist the Government with achieving its objectives, coping with economic and financial difficulties and creating the conditions for peace.

98. **Mr. Thapa** (Nepal) said that, in its Constitution, Nepal had established a rights-based, non-discriminatory approach to development and the country was committed to building an egalitarian society ensuring equality, prosperity and social justice. Policies and programmes had been implemented to promote inclusion, in particular of women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous communities and other disadvantaged groups.

99. The fundamental rights of women and girls, including equal lineage rights, the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health, were enshrined in the Constitution, which also guaranteed that women would account for at least 33 per cent of the members of provincial assemblies and the Federal Parliament. Similarly, the Government gave due priority to the welfare and protection of children and was committed to abolishing all forms of labour exploitation, including child labour, by 2025. Nepal had introduced an old age allowance programme for citizens aged 68 years and over, building on a tradition of inter-generational cooperation that provided seniors with a dignified place in the family and society. Persons with disabilities were provided with free, easy access to health, education and transport services, and the Government had introduced a quota system for parliamentary seats and posts in the civil service. It had also guaranteed equal rights for minorities, including the right to preserve and promote their language, script, culture and heritage.

100. Young people accounted for 44 per cent of Nepal's population, and developing their full potential remained a priority for the Government. The Government also recognized the importance of cooperative enterprises, which were highly effective in terms of financing micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, female empowerment, job creation and poverty reduction.

101. Despite those efforts, international support in the form of ODA, climate finance, foreign direct investment and genuine partnership were needed to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda. Enhanced and coordinated international cooperation, focused on economic growth, capital formation and employment generation, was essential.

102. **Ms. Bakytbekkyzy** (Kazakhstan) said that, to achieve the targets of the 2030 Agenda, Kazakhstan was working to create an inclusive and accessible

environment. The Government had responded to the pandemic by introducing a \$10-billion anti-crisis package of monetary policies and socioeconomic initiatives. Significant resources had been invested to improve the quality of education and health care services, and to increase the coverage and frequency of health screening for older people. A plan to promote active longevity had seen Kazakhstan rank ninth out of 29 States members of the European Union or the Economic Commission for Europe in the Active Ageing Index. In addition, the Government had launched projects to support young professionals' career development and provide mentorship to young people who were not in employment, education or training. A new social code had been adopted in 2023 and there were now ombudspersons for human rights and the rights of the socially vulnerable. To further support children and youth, 50 per cent of the annual investment income of the national wealth fund was to be deposited in special savings accounts for every child in Kazakhstan.

103. At the regional level, the President of Kazakhstan had announced an initiative to establish a regional hub for the Sustainable Development Goals in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to streamline inter-agency synergy and contribute to peace, sustainable development and prosperity in the region.

104. Kazakhstan was looking forward to the Summit of the Future with renewed ambition and welcomed the Secretary General's proposal to convene a world social summit in 2025.

105. **Mr. Vorshilov** (Mongolia) said that challenges to the full and effective inclusion of older persons and persons with disabilities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda required continuous mobilization of all necessary resources and support.

106. Mongolia welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office, as young people were key to achieving a sustainable recovery and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. Mongolia had adopted policies to promote youth employment and implemented a national strategy in 2021 focused on youth employment services, internships and entrepreneurship.

107. The advancement of women, the promotion of gender equality and women's participation in decision-making were integral parts of the national development agenda. With micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises accounting for around 72 per cent of employment, the Government had introduced measures and funding opportunities to support female entrepreneurs. A change to electoral law, in line with the recent constitutional reform, had stipulated that women must make up 30 per cent of party candidates.

108. **Mr. Gunaratna** (Sri Lanka) said that the issue of labour-market inequality needed to be addressed through comprehensive, gender-responsive, adaptive and sustainable social protection systems, as well as policies to broaden access to decent employment. Sri Lanka was a signatory to all major International Labour Organization conventions and had incorporated them into domestic law. However, public-private partnerships, rather than legislation alone, were required to address the pandemic-induced economic downturn and global insecurity.

109. While Sri Lanka had a proud record of addressing the basic needs of its people, as reflected in life expectancy and maternal and infant mortality indicators, 2022 had brought challenges, including widespread social unrest and protests. The Government had been successful in restoring economic stability, while addressing underlying fiscal and financial governance issues, and had initiated the reforms associated with the International Monetary Fund Extended Fund Facility for Sri Lanka. Amid economic and financial crises, Sri Lanka had made progress on matters such as education, health and nutrition.

110. The multiple crises facing the world could, at any time, disproportionately affect developing countries and undermine hard-won gains. Moreover, a report by the Commission for Social Development from November 2022 had predicted an uneven pace of recovery between developed and developing countries, which would widen inequalities among countries if left unchecked. There was therefore a pressing need to reform the financial architecture and forge South-South and North-South partnerships. International assistance through multilateral institutions should be rendered when a nation needed it and not when it was on the verge of collapse.

111. **Ms. O'Sullivan** (Ireland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Ireland was committed to ensuring a more equal, peaceful and sustainable world, including through the Sustainable Development Goals. Although the global North was estimated to be responsible for 92 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, those who had contributed the least to climate change, in countries such as Madagascar and Mozambique, were suffering the most. It was therefore time for the international community to act on its commitments and ensure climate justice. Ireland had played a key role in securing a historic agreement on new funding arrangements, including a loss and damage fund, at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It was vital to ensure that funds were available to communities on the front line of climate change,

especially in the least developed countries and small island developing States.

112. **Mr. Naeem** (Ireland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that addressing barriers to participation in economic, social and political life was a key aspect of social development. One such barrier was racism, which continued to plague societies across the globe and affected people of every race, creed and colour. The contemporary crisis of racism manifested itself in overt acts of violence and hatred, but also in systematic disparities in education, health care, employment and criminal justice.

113. The 2030 Agenda represented a pledge to leave no one behind. To fulfil that commitment, it was vital to consider intersecting forms of discrimination, foster an understanding of the historical roots of discrimination, promote empathy and encourage open dialogue. Ireland had launched a national action plan against racism in March 2023 and the youth of Ireland urged all Member States to move forward with the 2030 Agenda and facilitate social development as a matter of urgency.

114. **Ms. Tornius** (Estonia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that social development was an important agenda item for youth and intrinsically linked to peace and security. Young people typically had no choice over whether to be involved in armed conflict, but the impact on their education, economic opportunities and access to health and social protection at a key stage left them disproportionately affected for the rest of their lives.

115. The United Nations had verified 24,300 grave violations committed against children in 2022, including instances of killing and maiming, recruitment, use and abduction. There had also been a 112 per cent increase in attacks on schools and hospitals, in particular in Ukraine, Burkina Faso, Israel and the State of Palestine, Myanmar, Mali and Afghanistan. Estonia had witnessed the impact of a war of aggression on the youth of Ukraine, some of whom had been killed or forced to flee their homes or even their country. Such grim realities made it difficult to speak of social development, equal opportunities and leaving no one behind.

116. Since young people were disproportionately affected by violence and armed conflict, they should be included in conflict resolution and not seen as mere beneficiaries of peace processes. Peacebuilding must start at the grassroots level with peace education and national action plans for youth and peace and security. The Baltic youth delegates had found that young people from their States saw education as crucial to promoting the principles of peacebuilding. Furthermore, including women and young people in decision-making and leadership could help increase trust in the Government

and contribute to social cohesion. All Member States should ensure equal access to education for young people, and schools should be a safe space for diverse opinions and discussions.

117. **Ms. Mendez Gruezo** (Ecuador) said that economic and technological advances did not always suffice to meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups, including children, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, and ethnic and religious minorities, with respect to climate change and other emerging social phenomena. Inclusive public policies guaranteeing full enjoyment of civil, political, social, cultural and human rights to every individual were therefore essential.

118. Building on its rights-based Constitution, Ecuador had worked to develop social policies such as the 2021–2025 opportunities programme, which aimed to ensure equal opportunities for all and implement institutional reforms in line with the country’s legal commitments. It also remained committed to safeguarding political and civil rights, as demonstrated by recent legislative changes and efforts to combat corruption.

119. Furthermore, Ecuador had invested in broadening access to basic services such as drinking water, sanitation, education, health care and decent housing. As regards the protection of young people, Ecuador had succeeded in reducing chronic malnutrition in children under two years of age by 3.5 per cent, and other programmes were in place to care for families experiencing poverty and persons with disabilities.

120. Progress on social development at the local level had been substantial, but further advances would depend on bolstering regional measures to support infants and older people as part of a holistic approach that also focused on mental health, intersectionality and vulnerability to climate change. Ecuador remained committed to working closely with United Nations agencies and regional bodies to implement public policy aimed at protecting all persons, and especially the most vulnerable.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.