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Chair: Mr. Marschik (Austria)
later: Mr. Grünwald (Vice-Chair) (Slovakia)
later: Mr. Marschik (Austria)

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

Agenda item 71: Promotion and protection of human rights (continued) (A/78/198)

(a) Implementation of human rights instruments (continued) (A/78/40, A/78/44, A/78/48, A/78/55, A/78/56, A/78/240, A/78/263, A/78/271, A/78/281, A/78/324 and A/78/354)

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(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (continued) (A/78/204, A/78/212, A/78/223, A/78/244, A/78/278, A/78/297, A/78/299, A/78/326, A/78/327, A/78/338, A/78/340 and A/78/511)

(d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (continued) (A/78/36)

1. **Mr. Sewanyana** (Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order), introducing his final report (see A/78/262), said that the report highlighted the main observations from his previous reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. In the 2019 report (see A/74/245), he had looked at public participation and decision-making in global governance spaces such as the Group of Seven, the Group of 20, the Group of 77 and the group consisting of Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). Despite a number of efforts to increase consultations with different sections of society, participation in global governance spaces had remained tokenistic or non-existent. Public participation would enhance the transparency, legitimacy and credibility of those spaces and would contribute significantly to the fulfilment of their goals. It was particularly important to take the

voices and concerns of marginalized groups into account.

2. In the 2020 report (A/HRC/45/28; see A/75/206), he had examined the interplay between the economic policies and safeguards of international financial institutions and local governance. International financial institutions had direct influence on governance and should systematically take all necessary measures to discourage human rights violations and ensure respect for human rights and the principles of good governance.

3. In the 2021 report (A/HRC/48/58; see A/76/153), he had focused on the need for renewed, more effective and more inclusive multilateralism to respond to and recover from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. He had called for global leadership and coordination by a robust and adequately funded United Nations and for the full commitment and sustained engagement of Member States, international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society.

4. In the 2022 report (A/HRC/51/32; see A/77/180), he had examined some of the main challenges for the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security, as well as possible ways to overcome them. It was essential to uphold multilateralism through dialogue, diplomacy, negotiation and inclusiveness and to preserve the sanctity of the Charter of the United Nations. He remained hopeful that the gravity of the situations in Ukraine and Gaza would provide impetus to resolve long-standing contentious issues.

5. In the 2023 report (A/HRC/54/28), he had focused on the opportunities and challenges for youth participation and engagement in intergovernmental forums. Young people had a right to participate in public affairs and should play an important role in shaping policies that would affect their future. It was essential to create accessible and inclusive spaces where young people, including those from the global South and marginalized communities, could engage with intergovernmental entities.

6. It was regrettable that the geopolitical divide had caused some Member States to disengage from the mandate of the Independent Expert. He remained convinced that, with the engagement of all stakeholders, the mandate could make a lasting contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights, and he urged all Member States to cooperate fully with his successor.

7. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, as a founding member of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, his country emphasized the central importance of the principles and purposes of the Charter, which

were increasingly under threat. Certain States were seeking to divide the world into ideological blocs for the deliberate purpose of weakening and destroying the United Nations. By monopolizing privileges, technological progress and growth, wealthy countries violated the principle of sovereign equality of States and fomented instability. Some of them applied illegal and immoral unilateral coercive measures, which prevented developing countries from obtaining goods and services that were essential for sustainable development, including food and medicines such as COVID-19 vaccines. The unilateral coercive measures imposed on his country must be lifted, and Venezuelan Special Envoy Alex Nain Saab Morán must be released immediately. He asked the Independent Expert what steps could be taken to close the ideological divide.

8. **Ms. Wainwel** (Cameroon) said that Cameroon fully supported the mandate of the Independent Expert. She asked if the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were taking steps to engage with civil society organizations, major groups and academia; how bridges could be built between the United Nations and the international financial institutions in order to improve transparency and democracy; what, if any, effect his recommendation that the international financial institutions consider the human rights impact of austerity measures had had; what role institutions such as the BRICS group could play in promoting the establishment of a truly democratic and equitable international order; and, lastly, what advice the Independent Expert had for promoting the implementation of his recommendations.

9. **Ms. Novruz** (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous world and a just and equitable world order, based on the Charter of the United Nations and international law, had always been at the centre of the goals of the Movement. During the eighteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Baku in October 2019, the Heads of State and Government had reiterated that democracy was a universal value based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems. They had reaffirmed that, while all democracies shared common features, there was no single model of democracy. They had also reaffirmed the necessity of respect for sovereignty and the right to self-determination and of rejecting any attempt to break down legitimately established constitutional and democratic orders. In addition, they had expressed their conviction that international cooperation for the promotion of democracy, on the basis of respect for the principles enshrined in the

Charter and those of transparency, impartiality, non-selectivity and inclusiveness, could contribute to the consolidation of democracy at the national, regional and international levels.

10. The Movement stressed the fundamental and inalienable right of all peoples, in particular in all Non-Self-Governing Territories and territories under foreign occupation, to self-determination. The exercise of self-determination by peoples under foreign occupation remained valid and essential. Strict observance of the principles of international law and the fulfilment in good faith of the obligations assumed by States was of the utmost importance for the maintenance of international peace and security.

11. **Mr. Valido Martínez** (Cuba) said that the urgently needed democratic and equitable international order could only be achieved through multilateralism, international cooperation and solidarity, particularly towards developing countries. By exacerbating the impact of unilateral coercive measures, the COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated even more clearly that such measures stood in the way of the new order. Unilateral coercive measures ran counter to the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and they hampered sustainable development. Cuba, which had been under an economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States for more than six decades, was a prime example of their impact on development. He asked the Independent Expert to elaborate on how unilateral coercive measures affected the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order.

12. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that, by trying to reshape international law to suit their own geopolitical interests, certain Western countries were undermining the Charter of the United Nations. The Russian Federation rejected the use of unilateral coercive measures to pressure sovereign States to modify their independent foreign policies under the pretext of protecting human rights. Those politically motivated measures violated fundamental human rights and freedoms and universally recognized norms of international law, undermined international efforts to resolve crises and had been repeatedly condemned by the General Assembly. Using unilateral restrictions to achieve short-term political goals was ineffective and could have harmful economic and political effects.

13. The issues examined by the Independent Expert in his thematic reports remained highly relevant and were discussed in other forums by countries that rejected his mandate. The Russian delegation would be interested in

hearing his views on access to vaccines in developing countries.

14. **Mr. Zumilla** (Malaysia) said that his country had implemented a number of measures and initiatives to promote youth participation and engagement in Malaysian decision-making and political processes. He asked how States could better understand the needs and aspirations of young people and ensure that their perspectives were represented in decision-making processes at all levels.

15. **Mr. Yang Fan** (China) said that a democratic and equitable order was crucial to the promotion and protection of human rights. China called on all parties to practise true multilateralism; uphold the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits; promote the development of a more just and equitable global governance system; oppose unilateralism and hegemonism; condemn unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction; and reject the politicization and instrumentalization of human rights issues. China stood ready to work with all parties to build a community with a shared future for humankind.

16. Young people had the power to drive social change and human progress. As long as the youth of all nations stood united in promoting the common values of humankind, it would be possible to create a future of joint contribution and shared benefits, development, prosperity, health, security and mutual respect and learning.

17. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that unilateral coercive measures were an unlawful means of political extortion, coercion and intimidation that relied on exerting socioeconomic pressure on the civilian populations of the targeted countries. In contravention of the spirit of multilateralism, the United States and the European Union continued to violate international law and endanger international peace and security through the use of such measures, which were a serious impediment to the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order and should be lifted immediately. She asked the Independent Expert to provide details on the adverse humanitarian and human rights effects of unilateral coercive measures, secondary sanctions and overcompliance.

18. **Mr. Scalabrini-McKellar** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that multilateralism and dialogue among stakeholders were more necessary than ever. Unless the existing machinery was modified, the disparity between rich and poor countries would continue to grow. When global military expenditure reached an all-time high during the greatest health crisis in more than a century, the necessity of reform was

patent. He asked how the Independent Expert intended to promote more stable funding for human rights mechanisms.

19. **Mr. Sewanyana** (Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order) said that closer cooperation among Member States was essential to address current challenges. The BRICS group could play a role in establishing a democratic and equitable international order, but it was necessary to examine its relationship with other structures.

20. If properly targeted, unilateral coercive measures could have some positive impact, but they tended to harm the civilian population, especially marginalized groups, and they were unnecessary. They should be replaced by multilateral action, which was the only truly effective way to resolve disagreements between States.

21. With regard to the implementation of his recommendations, he reiterated his call to revitalize the General Assembly by creating a platform for the examination of its many resolutions and their impact. It was also necessary to reform the Security Council and to ensure that the international economic and financial architecture addressed disparities between the rich and the poor. Multilateralism, the question of youth participation in international forums and the right to self-determination must figure on the agenda of the Summit of the Future. Without access to self-determination, communities in many different countries would continue to be excluded from decision-making processes, to be denied control over their resources and to be unable to exercise their political rights.

22. Democracy was a universal value, but its definition was contested. The delegations should consider the current proposal to create a new Human Rights Council mandate of special rapporteur on democracy.

23. **Ms. Douhan** (Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights), introducing her report on secondary sanctions, overcompliance and human rights (see [A/78/196](#)), said that increasing efforts to enforce unilateral sanctions regimes, including through penalties for facilitating their circumvention, created fear and uncertainty resulting in overcompliance. In the report, she looked at the factors driving the rise of zero-risk policies, their impact on human rights and humanitarian assistance, challenges for access to justice, and the growing use of extraterritorial jurisdiction as a means of enforcing primary unilateral sanctions. She also offered a legal assessment of various

categories of sanctions enforcement and overcompliance.

24. Sanctioning States often framed overcompliance as an unintended consequence that was outside their responsibility and control. However, the current complex sanctions regimes created conditions that rendered overcompliance unavoidable, including frequent changes, overlapping regimes, broad or unclear language, politically motivated interpretations, secondary sanctions and penalties for circumvention, an expanded scope of extraterritorial jurisdiction, uncertainty about the scope of humanitarian carve-outs, complex licensing procedures for the delivery of humanitarian goods, and the absence of mechanisms to protect humanitarian actors.

25. The impacts of overcompliance violated nearly all of the civil, economic, social and cultural rights of the country under sanctions, as well as those of countries maintaining economic or other relations with it. Zero-risk policies and overcompliance discriminated against nationals and residents of targeted countries on the basis of nationality, origin or residence, in violation of well-recognized principles of human rights. Unilateral sanctions and overcompliance prevented or impeded the delivery of humanitarian assistance and could also hinder the implementation of Security Council humanitarian resolutions. Moreover, a variety of factors, including the high cost of legal aid in sanctions cases and the risk of additional charges against legal professionals, could deny targeted individuals their right of access to justice and right to due process, in addition to undermining the presumption of innocence.

26. None of the responses to the Special Rapporteur's numerous communications regarding overcompliance had been substantive. Some respondents had made inaccurate allegations, while others had attempted to shift responsibility from the State to businesses or vice versa. In fact, all stakeholders, including sanctioning States, organizations and complying and overcomplying businesses, bore responsibility for human rights violations resulting from unilateral coercive measures and overcompliance. Moreover, "unintended consequences" or "business self-restraint" could not be invoked to legitimize primary or secondary unilateral sanctions regimes or the imposition of civil and criminal penalties for their circumvention.

27. Owing to the illegality of the overwhelming majority of unilateral sanctions, the application of extraterritorial jurisdiction as a means of coercion was contrary to international law. Extradition requests in sanctions-related criminal cases were also illegal.

28. The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights established a due diligence obligation of businesses to take measures to prevent violations of human rights, and a due diligence obligation of States to ensure that businesses under their jurisdiction and control complied with human rights standards. Misinterpreting those obligations in order to ensure compliance with sanctions regulations was a breach of international law. Furthermore, failure to establish mechanisms to ensure that business conduct did not infringe the rights enshrined in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights constituted a violation of the Covenant.

29. States and regional organizations should, inter alia, lift any measures that did not fit the criteria for retorsion or countermeasures; lift and avoid secondary sanctions as well as civil and criminal measures to enforce unilateral primary sanctions; stop issuing non-binding interpretative documents; ensure that unilateral sanctions and overcompliance with them did not affect critical infrastructure and services; take all necessary measures to eliminate or mitigate overcompliance; ensure that the activity of businesses under their jurisdiction and control did not violate human rights extraterritorially; and provide appropriate resources and legal representation for individuals affected by unilateral sanctions and overcompliance. Businesses should avoid zero-risk policies and overcompliance, particularly with regard to essential goods and services. Lastly, all United Nations agencies should include an assessment of the humanitarian impact of unilateral sanctions and overcompliance in their agendas, and States should provide information on such impact to all relevant United Nations mechanisms.

30. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country was subject to more than 900 illegal unilateral coercive measures, which had led to great human and economic losses. In the recent political declarations of the high-level meetings of the General Assembly, there had been no mention of the impact of such measures, owing to the biased and inflexible position of the countries of the global North and a former high-level official. He asked what progress the Special Rapporteur had made in raising awareness of the impact of unilateral coercive measures among officials in those countries, what strategies might be effective for doing so and whether change was likely. He would value her opinion on the need for a mechanism to monitor the impact of unilateral coercive measures.

31. **Ms. Novruz** (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that, at the summit of the Movement held in October 2019, the Heads of State and Government had reaffirmed their

opposition to all unilateral coercive measures, including those used as tools to pressure any country, particularly developing countries. Such measures hindered the well-being of the populations of affected countries and created obstacles to the full realization of their human rights. People should not be deprived of their own means of subsistence and development.

32. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries remained committed to promoting, preserving, revitalizing, reforming and strengthening multilateralism and multilateral decision-making processes within the United Nations through strict adherence to the Charter of the United Nations and international law, which were undermined by unilateralism and unilaterally imposed unilateral measures. The Movement opposed the use and threat of use of force and coercive measures as a means of achieving national political objectives.

33. **Mr. Kryvaltsevich** (Belarus) said that his country was concerned about continued uncertainty over the legality of secondary sanctions; the increasing use of international organizations to ensure national or regional implementation of unilateral sanctions; intentionally complex requirements for reviewing existing sanctions; restricted access to justice in the context of secondary sanctions, and creeping extraterritorial jurisdiction. Belarus called for the full, unconditional and irreversible removal of unilateral coercive measures, whose use should be seen not only as a violation of international law and human rights but also as a criminal practice.

34. **Mr. Alnwelati** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that unilateral coercive measures had negative and even dangerous consequences for the enjoyment of human rights and were illegal. As a result of overcompliance with the unilateral sanctions imposed on his country, many businesses and organizations were refusing to engage commercially with his Government or to extend assistance to the Syrian people in the wake of the massive earthquake of February 2023. The situation was exacerbated by that fact that, since the adoption of the Caesar Act by the United States in 2019, medical production and imports had halted owing to import bans, technology bans and banking difficulties. The unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic should be lifted unconditionally.

35. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that unilateral coercive measures were a flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. Compliance with such measures violated the human rights of people in the targeted countries, particularly women and children. Responsibility for their impact on human rights

was shared equally by the issuing and complying parties. Every United Nations body should condemn the escalation of their use by the United States and the European Union. Due diligence should not be applied in the context of unilateral sanctions, except as it related to the extraterritorial human rights obligations of imposing and complying States. Her delegation would be interested in hearing about the Special Rapporteur's most recent joint activities with other special procedure mandate holders.

36. **Ms. Pichardo Urbina** (Nicaragua) said that her country and its people were the victims of illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed by imperialist, neo-colonialist Powers such as the United States. United States sanctions included the Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act of 2018, which instructed the relevant United States authorities to oppose the issuance of loans to Nicaragua. The harm caused by unilateral coercive measures extended beyond the targeted country. Nicaragua would continue to condemn the purpose of unilateral coercive measures and to call for unity and solidarity against them.

37. **Mr. Manyanga** (Zimbabwe) said that secondary sanctions had a spillover effect on critical sectors of targeted States, affecting the lives of vulnerable populations, including women, children and refugees. The causes of overcompliance outlined by the Special Rapporteur underscored the ambiguous nature of the current sanctions regimes, which posed a significant threat to international law and human rights. Zimbabwe condemned the hypocrisy of States that forced everyone else to cooperate with country-specific mechanisms that they sponsored, while refusing to cooperate with a mandate established by the United Nations. The illegal and unwarranted sanctions imposed on his and other countries should be lifted immediately and unconditionally.

38. **Mr. Zumilla** (Malaysia) said that his country opposed all forms of unilateral economic, financial and commercial embargo. States that imposed or implemented such unilateral coercive measures against other States should immediately cease such practices and resolve their disputes amicably through dialogue and negotiation. He asked what the major consequences of overcompliance with sanctions regimes were and how they could be minimized.

39. **Ms. Lamigueriro Cañedo** (Cuba) said that the Special Rapporteur had witnessed the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the Cuban people during her visit a few months earlier. For more than 60 years, Cubans had lived under an economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States –

the longest and most severe sanctions regime ever inflicted on any country. Those sanctions were a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of the Cuban people and the main obstacle to Cuban development. Her delegation agreed that, by their extraterritorial nature, secondary sanctions such as the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 infringed on national sovereignty. She asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on the extraterritorial scope of unilateral coercive measures and their impact on the human rights of the populations affected.

40. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that only the Security Council could issue legitimate sanctions. The Russian Federation opposed the introduction of secondary sanctions and the extraterritorial application of sanctions. All such measures had a harmful impact on the economic and humanitarian situation of developing countries.

41. Sanctions targeting athletes with disabilities were particularly reprehensible. Even though the Appeals Tribunal of the International Paralympic Committee had overturned the decision to suspend the membership of the Russian National Paralympic Committee, Russian Paralympians were still not allowed to participate in international competitions. Barring those athletes constituted discrimination on the basis of nationality and political conviction. His delegation would value the Special Rapporteur's opinion on the matter.

42. **Mr. Passmoor** (South Africa) said that his country opposed the application of unilateral coercive measures, which impeded development and the enjoyment of human rights, had no basis in international law and undermined the principles of multilateralism. The imposition of such measures represented an attempt by economically powerful States to coerce other States to act in a certain manner. Universal coercive measures created competing obligations for businesses, forcing them to choose between due diligence on human rights and due diligence on sanctions.

43. In the current climate of overcompliance and excessive de-risking, countries under sanctions often struggled to maintain supply chains and faced serious delays and exorbitant costs. The unilateral coercive measures being implemented against Zimbabwe and Cuba should be lifted so that the two countries could pursue development and care for their people.

44. He asked the Special Rapporteur to explain how the onerous and complicated requirements surrounding secondary sanctions affected the ability of businesses to support a positive human rights culture and even to participate in the global market.

45. **Mr. Yang Xiaokun** (China) said that his delegation welcomed the attention given in the report to the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the right to health and appreciated the Special Rapporteur's development of the Sanctions Research Platform. The sanctions imposed by the United States and other Western countries had caused serious hardship in the countries under sanctions, including violations of the right to life and health. The Caesar Act, adopted by the United States in 2019, had resulted in the denial of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, and the unilateral sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran by the United States had led to around 13,000 deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic. States imposing unilateral coercive measures should lift them immediately and should compensate the countries and peoples harmed.

46. **Mr. Muñoz** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that humanitarian exemptions to sanctions regimes were rendered ineffective or inefficient by laborious customs inspections and customs seizures. The efforts of humanitarian agencies were further challenged by complex tax arrangements that obstructed the cross-border flow of medical supplies and equipment, while bureaucratic customs and excise procedures created delays in the delivery of essential goods and increased the cost of humanitarian aid through fines, penalties and fees. He asked what strategies and procedures the Special Rapporteur was implementing to address bureaucratic and customs-related barriers to humanitarian assistance.

47. **Ms. Douhan** (Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights) said that raising awareness of the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures was indeed essential. She endeavoured to produce extremely detailed reports, because the facts and figures spoke for themselves. She had also developed and launched the Sanctions Research Platform, which was being actively used by people around the world. However, collecting and evaluating data were also important. She was currently working on a monitoring and impact assessment tool for that purpose and planned a field trial of the methodology in 2024.

48. Access to justice was one of the greatest contemporary challenges for human rights. People or businesses directly designated by unilateral sanctions faced barriers to justice ranging from confusing legislation to lawyers' fees. However, individuals who were not directly designated formed a much larger group, and they had absolutely no recourse, either in court or before United Nations treaty bodies.

49. The delivery of humanitarian assistance was indeed very challenging. While she welcomed the humanitarian carve-outs, they were almost impossible to implement because of the requirements and limitations imposed by sanctions regimes, including financial, delivery-related and insurance restrictions and the need for multiple licences. The situation was exacerbated by business and bank overcompliance.

50. In her latest report to the Human Rights Council, on the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the right to health (A/HRC/54/23), she looked more closely at health-related concerns. With respect to cooperation with other special procedure mandate holders, she regularly invited other mandate holders to join her statements. In the press release calling for the lifting of sanction-induced restrictions published after the earthquake in the Syrian Arab Republic, she had been joined by 10 other mandate holders. Regarding the impact of unilateral coercive measures on women and children, she would address that issue more fully in a future thematic report.

51. In practice, the current distinction between sectoral sanctions and targeted sanctions was meaningless. Targeted sanctions imposed on a high-level government official spilled over into the entire sector under the official's authority, and sanctions targeting a company that was a major source of government revenue deprived the Government of funds that could have been used for social supports or development projects. The scope of targeted sanctions was further broadened by overcompliance, with the result that the so-called targeted sanctions were actually comprehensive.

52. In addition to the recommendations already given in her report for avoiding or mitigating overcompliance, she recommended that stakeholders pay more attention to existing legal norms, such as the customary norms of due diligence, the principles of responsibility of States and international organizations and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. She was developing guiding principles on sanctions, overcompliance and human rights and would send the draft document to States and other stakeholders for comment as soon as it was finalized.

53. While sanctions traditionally did not apply to sports, education and culture, that was often not the case in practice, as a result of State policy and business overcompliance. The application of sanctions affecting persons in those fields constituted discrimination and had no basis in international law.

54. In Our Common Agenda, the Secretary-General spoke about cooperation, solidarity, common humanity

and the rule of law. Those principles should be applied in the settlement of disputes between States.

55. Overcompliance among businesses was primarily motivated by uncertainty, which was fuelled by the many factors discussed in her report. Another reason was that businesses that were prohibited or restricted or businesses facing criminal or civil penalties lacked protection. Even after a settlement agreement, fines could reach billions of dollars, driving some businesses into bankruptcy.

56. Regarding the acceptance of equal responsibility for the imposition of unilateral sanctions, in the case of the European Union, member States assigned responsibility to the European Union. The European Union said that businesses were responsible, and businesses pointed to the European Union. In short, no one took responsibility for the sanctions and their effects. In closing, she reiterated her openness to dialogue.

57. **Mr. Arrojo Agudo** (Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation), introducing his report on water as an argument for peace, twinning and cooperation (see A/78/253), said that a lack of drinking water resulted in suffering and daily insecurity for families, exhausting work for women and girls, and an erosion of trust in institutions at all levels. Of the 2 billion people without guaranteed access to safe drinking water, many lived in the 153 countries that shared river basins and aquatic ecosystems. The Governments of those countries had a collective responsibility to ensure the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation.

58. Climate change was exacerbating the risks of droughts and floods, threatening the right to life of millions of people and ultimately leading to mass migration, violence and the destabilization of entire regions. The traditional approach to water management, in which water was treated as a national resource, fostered competition and conflict between neighbouring peoples. Water was even sometimes used as a weapon of war against the civilian population during armed conflicts, which constituted a war crime under international law.

59. It was vital to adopt approaches based on human rights and ecosystems, moving away from competition for resources and towards shared responsibility for sustainable management of basins. That was not only an ethical and justice requirement but also a global necessity with respect to tackling climate change and promoting peace, security and survival for millions. Furthermore, such approaches must promote transboundary public participation, in line with

international water law and human rights law. While such approaches alone would not eliminate war, they would help to prevent conflicts, open perspectives for solutions and consolidate peace and cooperation in post-conflict situations.

60. He called upon States that shared transboundary basins to sign the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and promote agreements and institutions at river-basin level. The Security Council should treat transboundary water management as key to peace and security.

61. There were a number of cross-border charters and institutions in place in Africa, including with respect to the Lake Chad, Senegal River and Niger River basins. The Mekong River Commission, with its public exchange of technical and project-related information, was a noteworthy case study in Asia. Meanwhile, the European Union Water Framework Directive was providing international leadership on the development of shared responsibility among States. Norms, principles and laws were in place to address the challenge of transboundary water management. However, the international community should clarify key concepts and work towards the development of binding obligations and effective implementation by States.

62. **Mr. Al-Khaqani** (Iraq) said that the construction of dams and other projects on water courses, coupled with the unequitable distribution of water resources, had led to an increase in salinity. The scarcity of water resources meant that 60 per cent of arable land was not being used. That had a negative impact on ecosystems and biodiversity, and adversely affected all aspects of human rights, especially in rural and agrarian areas. The resulting displacement had implications for demographics in Iraq, putting a great deal of pressure on the ability of cities to meet the needs of their citizens. He asked how the commodification of water was viewed under international law.

63. **Mr. Šukurica** (Croatia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that access to clean water and proper sanitation facilities played a pivotal role in shaping the health and well-being of young people, empowering them to lead healthier lives, excel in their studies and actively participate in their communities. It was also critical for the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals, including those relating to poverty reduction, improved health, environmental sustainability and economic growth. He asked what specific actions young people around the world could take to support the implementation of the recommendations set out in the report.

64. **Ms. Szelivanov** (Representative of the European Union, speaking in its capacity as observer) said that 2023 marked a turning point on the issue of water, with the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, generating significant political momentum and commitment. Access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, accessible and affordable water and sanitation was a human right.

65. She welcomed the report’s focus on transboundary water management, which was vital in the context of combating climate change. The European Union was committed to working with the United Nations and its partners to promote water cooperation and diplomacy around the world.

66. The European Union was working to ensure a water-resilient society and water security for all by 2050. Achieving that would entail protecting and restoring aquatic ecosystems and striking a fair balance between supply and demand in order to meet current needs without compromising the rights of future generations.

67. The European Union had a long track record of supporting water cooperation in Africa, Latin America and Central Asia, and was working with its partners to develop and implement integrated water resource management plans, strengthen transboundary water institutions and promote linkages between water, energy and climate.

68. She asked how the European Union and other regional organizations could best support transboundary water management and cooperation, particularly in regions where water resources were scarce or under pressure from climate change.

69. **Mr. Bellmont Roldán** (Spain) said that, although some progress had been made towards Sustainable Development Goal 6, millions of people still lacked access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. As set out in the report, the rights to water and sanitation were connected to the well-being and sustainability of aquatic ecosystems. The Special Rapporteur was correct that climate change did not recognize borders and it was essential to protect ecosystems through cooperation at all levels. Spain had put that focus into practice by recognizing the personhood of the Mar Menor, Europe’s largest saltwater lagoon, thereby strengthening and broadening the rights of people living in the affected area. He asked the Special Rapporteur what factors helped to ensure successful regional transboundary cooperation.

70. **Mr. Abdullah** (Bangladesh) said that his Government was making sincere efforts with respect to water and sanitation. Currently, 99 per cent of the population had access to safe drinking water and 88.8 per cent enjoyed improved sanitation. There was a plan in place to ensure long-term water security in the face of climate change, and the Government was focused on reducing dependence on groundwater through increased use of surface water and rainwater.

71. He asked the Special Rapporteur to share examples of best practice in relation to ensuring the equal and fair participation of women. He also asked whether the Special Rapporteur could suggest ways to encourage cooperation between countries in the global North and those in the global South on providing the latter with financial and technological assistance and building their capacity to fulfil their populations' rights to safe water and sanitation.

72. **Mr. Aydil** (Türkiye) said that his country attached utmost importance to human rights, including access to safe drinking water and sanitation. However, his delegation was unable to concur with many of the findings outlined in the Special Rapporteur's report and rejected all unfounded allegations against Türkiye. The resolution mandating the preparation of the report ([A/HRC/RES/51/19](#)) did not justify the inclusion of transboundary water matters.

73. In its resolution [76/153](#), the General Assembly invited regional and international organizations to complement efforts by States to progressively realize the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation in accordance with their respective mandates. The report should therefore have compiled examples of best practice in order to promote the progressive realization of those human rights rather than singling out countries unduly.

74. Paragraphs 28 and 83 of the report did not reflect the reality on the ground and included unfair criticism of Türkiye. The report claimed that the Southeastern Anatolia Project was negatively affecting the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation of downstream countries. In fact, it was an integrated, multi-sector project designed to meet targets related to the Sustainable Development Goals. The Special Rapporteur would be well advised to focus on how water management could be ameliorated in downstream countries rather than criticizing States that were aiming to use limited water resources efficiently. As both an upstream and a downstream country, Türkiye recognized the rights and obligations of riparian States and was always willing to engage in reasonable and scientific cooperation at the bilateral level.

75. **Mr. Wennholz** (Germany) said that his country welcomed the report's focus, and in particular the notion of applying an ecosystem-based approach and a human rights perspective to water management in order to prevent and address conflicts. He asked the Special Rapporteur to discuss the main challenges he faced in his efforts to enable a human rights-based approach and promote the health of aquatic ecosystems.

76. **Mr. Yang Xiaokun** (China) said that oceans and seas bound humanity together as a community with a shared future. They were the common inheritance of the whole world, which everyone had a duty to protect. The Japanese Government, without consulting neighbouring countries and other stakeholders, had started forcibly and unilaterally discharging contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the sea, seriously jeopardizing the rights of people in coastal countries and beyond. Multiple stakeholders, including the Japanese population, had expressed strong objections. Almost two months had elapsed since Japan had begun releasing contaminated water, but it had yet to adopt a constructive posture or respond seriously to the legitimate concerns of the international community.

77. Japan should dispose of such material in a responsible manner, and the international community should support the establishment of an effective standing international monitoring arrangement to ensure the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including neighbouring States. He urged the Special Rapporteur and the relevant international bodies to continue to monitor the situation.

78. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation wished to know why, when Ukrainian representatives were apparently so concerned about the human rights of those living in the Republic of Crimea, the authorities in Kyiv had, in April 2014, imposed a water blockade on the peninsula and completely shut off the water supply through the North Crimean Canal, which had previously provided 85 per cent of the residents' water supply. Those criminal actions had led to a shortage of drinking water in the eastern regions of the peninsula and difficulties in the agricultural sector, as well as a risk of environmental disaster.

79. It was clear that the malicious imposition of a water blockade on Crimea should be described as a violation by Ukraine of its human rights obligations. It was essentially collective punishment of those living on the peninsula for having freely voted in a referendum conducted in full compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and the right to self-determination set out therein. The Russian Federation had consistently highlighted that violation in the hope that it would be

included in United Nations human rights documents, but that had not happened.

80. **Mr. Worthe** (United States of America) said that his country's Global Water Strategy sought to improve health, prosperity, stability and resilience through sustainable and equitable water resource management, and access to safe drinking water, sanitation services and hygiene practices. The aim was to provide 22 million people with access to safe drinking water and sanitation between 2022 and 2027.

81. Water and sanitation services, including the conservation and management of freshwater resources and the associated ecosystems, should be made climate-resilient. Furthermore, it was important to anticipate, prevent and reduce conflict and fragility related to water resources and to foster equitable access to drinking water and sanitation in conflict-affected settings. His delegation would be grateful if the Special Rapporteur could provide examples of successful water diplomacy.

82. **Mr. Eldahshan** (Egypt) said that his country had taken particular note of paragraphs 27, 28 and 42 of the report. The principles of national solidarity, international law and the prohibition on damaging water sources should be applied with respect to the water crisis. Meeting the urgent need for measures to support affected countries would require transboundary cooperation based on political will and effective negotiations. He asked the Special Rapporteur what measures could be taken to improve inter-State cooperation on guaranteeing the right to water.

83. **Ms. Alaoui** (Morocco) said that her country had mobilized its conventional, surface and groundwater supplies efficiently since independence thanks to an innovative and proactive water resource management policy. The right to water was a prerequisite for a dignified life and the realization of all other human rights. In July 2023, Morocco had organized the third International Conference on Climate and Water, on the theme "Basin management, key to adaptation and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals".

84. Particular attention should be paid to developing countries, especially in terms of assistance, knowledge transfer and capacity-building, in order to help them realize their rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. She asked how the Special Rapporteur would assess international cooperation in that regard and how it could be further strengthened.

85. **Mr. Ono** (Japan) said that certain assertions made during the interactive dialogue regarding the discharge of water into the sea had not reflected the facts. His country had always provided the international

community with detailed and transparent explanations in that regard based on scientific evidence. It had continued to do so while undergoing the review by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which had the authority to establish, adapt and apply international safety standards in the field of nuclear energy. According to IAEA, Japan had provided information, consulted stakeholders in Japan and abroad, and engaged with other countries to ensure transparency. It was taking, and would continue to take, measures in strict compliance with the relevant international law, while giving due consideration to international practice.

86. The discharge of water treated using the Advanced Liquid Processing System had begun on 21 August 2023 and was subject to monitoring by the Government of Japan, the operator TEPCO and IAEA. No anomalies had been detected as a result. IAEA had confirmed that the level of tritium in the discharged water was below the regulatory threshold. Japan would continue to provide information, including the results of monitoring, to the international community in a timely manner.

87. **Ms. Lucii** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that it was sobering to note that 2.2 billion people worldwide still lacked access to clean drinking water and 4.2 billion lacked access to safe sanitation. Recent approaches such as Make Rights Real sought to address the root causes of the issue and include rights holders in decision-making processes. Those approaches were at the heart of the Order's cross-regional water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programme in India, Nepal and Uganda.

88. Addressing menstrual hygiene, especially in countries of the global South, was an integral part of the Order's humanitarian and development work. Women and girls were entitled to dignity and respect in that regard, which was why the Order provided them with knowledge of the menstrual cycle and menstrual hygiene and offered them a safe space for questions and discussions. Ensuring appropriate menstrual hygiene promoted health and advanced gender equality.

89. **Mr. Arrojo Agudo** (Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation) said that he was sincerely grateful for the contributions of the various delegations, whether or not they had agreed with the conclusions set out in his report. His role was to help States to fulfil their responsibilities, which was why he was always keen to assist those most affected or facing the greatest difficulties. He would continue to engage with States to discuss how he could contribute to solutions.

90. He had been repeatedly asked in recent days to share his view of and recommendations regarding the situation in Gaza and its impact on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. He fully endorsed the recent positions expressed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General. Both had put themselves in the shoes of Israelis and Palestinians, not out of diplomatic impartiality but in order to understand the pain felt by both sides and, on that basis, search for solutions that would bring an end to the madness of war and the vicious cycle of hatred and violence.

91. The Secretary-General had condemned the expulsion of Jews from his own country, Portugal. As a Spaniard, the Special Rapporteur had a duty to acknowledge the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from his own country and seek forgiveness for the blame he bore as an heir to those who had committed what would now be recognized as a crime against humanity.

92. He recommended making water a symbol of peace, like the blue flag of the United Nations, rather than a premise for war, hatred and death. Water must not be used to inflict inhumane and indiscriminate punishment on civilian populations, as was currently occurring in Gaza. For a decade and a half, the blockade had deprived people there of access to the basic resources needed to live a dignified life, including those required to guarantee the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation.

93. With a polluted, overused and salinized aquifer serving as the only source of water in that period, 95 per cent of the water available was no longer safe to drink. Indiscriminate bombardment of facilities and infrastructure, coupled with a total energy blockade, had led to the collapse of the supply network. The international community could not and should not tolerate the inhumane, brutal and illegal punishment currently being inflicted on the population of Gaza. He called upon all States to put an end to the war in Gaza in accordance with the central aim of the United Nations since its founding: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

94. In the light of the Secretary-General's call for an immediate ceasefire and the release of hostages, he called on Member States to ensure respect for human rights, including the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, as a means of breaking the cycle of vengeance, hatred and violence. That cycle would generate neither security for Israel nor justice for the Palestinian people and would only lead to more hatred, violence and death. It was time to put a stop to the madness.

95. *Mr. Grünwald (Slovakia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

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

97. **Mr. Machado Mourião (Uruguay)** said that the fundamental objective of promoting human rights was ensuring human dignity in its fullest form, including the rights underpinning the various conventions and agreements endorsed by most Member States. However, such frameworks were insufficient without tangible national efforts to promote the well-being of the population. When promoting human rights, Member States should prioritize inter-State dialogue and cooperation rather than confrontation. It was vital to adhere to the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, as they guaranteed the credibility and effectiveness needed to adequately serve the interests of the international community.

98. December 2023 would mark 75 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guaranteed the right to life, liberty and security of person. To ensure full enjoyment of that right, States should continue to call for a moratorium on the use of death penalty. His country, which had abolished the death penalty in 1907, viewed it as an irreversible and irreparable form of punishment, with the potential for miscarriages of justice. There was no conclusive evidence that it was effective in reducing criminal conduct.

99. The Committee should strongly condemn cases of extrajudicial execution and require all States to put an end to the practice. The fight against extrajudicial execution should be based on prevention, investigation and accountability, using gender and identity perspectives to analyse the nature of the killings, the forms of harm and violence, and the risk factors and vulnerability of certain people and groups.

100. It was stipulated in article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that everyone was entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of their rights and obligations. Respect for human rights and the administration of justice were therefore closely linked. The integrity of the judicial system, as well as an independent legal profession, were essential prerequisites for the protection of human rights, the rule of law, good governance and democracy.

101. The Committee should continue to work towards the protection and realization of human rights for all, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups. It was

also essential to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

102. The international context of interconnected crises and conflicts posed a threat to the rights of people of every age and worsened gender inequality. It was also leading to irrepressible migratory flows that international assistance and cooperation were unable to contain. Countries of origin, transit and destination had a fundamental duty to protect the human rights of migrants through legislation, programmes and policies.

103. **Mr. Kwoba** (Uganda) said that escalating global challenges to peace, stability and security at the national, regional and international levels threatened the preservation and protection of human rights. His delegation wished to offer sincere condolences to all victims of senseless violence and oppression. Promoting and protecting human rights was a central pillar of the Constitution, policies and programmes of Uganda, which was a signatory to numerous international and regional human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Victims of human rights violations in his country could seek redress through the courts or the Uganda Human Rights Commission, which had been established in 1997 and granted judicial powers under the Constitution.

104. Uganda advocated for the principles of impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-discrimination, and rejected double standards and politicization. Respect for individual rights and freedoms was essential for national development and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. His country was working with key stakeholders and partners to implement inclusive policies and programmes that contributed to economic growth. Its approach to human rights was to respect other people's values, and it expected others to respect values that were deeply rooted in Ugandan culture.

105. Uganda believed in the right to development and continued to prioritize socioeconomic rights, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups. His Government was committed to education rooted in the core values of family, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and pledged to collaborate closely with its partners to realize the fundamental right to lifelong learning. However, many learners faced significant challenges in the form of violence or well-orchestrated campaigns to promote alien practices. In the light of the paramount importance of protecting children from abuse, Uganda was determined to enhance the prevention, reporting and referral of all harmful

practices. It remained steadfast in its commitment to ensuring that all citizens could enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms.

106. **Ms. Mbasogo Mangue** (Equatorial Guinea) said that the international community should mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by redoubling its efforts to raise awareness of the importance of liberty, equality and justice for the protection of human dignity and the promotion of personal development.

107. Equatorial Guinea had celebrated 55 years of independence on 12 October 2023. The first 11 years of its existence had been marked by systematic human rights violations that had undermined the credibility of political, social, economic and cultural structures, isolating the country from the international community and depriving its people of the hope of freedom, peace and progress. That situation had changed on 3 August 1979, when the President, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, had initiated a political transition that would encompass structural reforms to promote and guarantee respect for human rights at the legislative and institutional levels.

108. In accordance with its national policy on social development and inclusion for all, and its determination to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Equatorial Guinea supported gender equality and female empowerment. Specifically, women had been nominated to key positions, such as President of the Senate and Prime Minister. Efforts were being made to advance the rights of children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in order to improve the lives of all citizens.

109. Human rights should be promoted in accordance with the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, as well as genuine and constructive international dialogue. Equatorial Guinea reaffirmed its commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of every State. United Nations mechanisms played a vital role because they served as the basis for inter-State interaction. Her Government was committed to international human rights systems and would continue to comply with United Nations standards in order to consolidate human rights around the world.

110. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) said that the world was grappling with crises on multiple fronts, including conflicts, a rise in extreme poverty and the deprivation of basic rights. That was partly the result of an uneven developmental trajectory between developed and developing nations, with the latter being at a

disadvantage because of colonization and historical marginalization.

111. It was vital to address global inequalities, such as the fact that the wealthiest 1 per cent of individuals had claimed around half of newly generated wealth over the preceding decade. Development organizations were warning of an unprecedented rise in global inequality and poverty, while many nations were teetering on the verge of financial collapse, with the poorest countries allocating four times more money to debt repayment to developed countries than to health care and basic services for their populations.

112. The imposition of unilateral coercive measures must end. The increasing use of such measures demonstrated a flagrant and callous disregard for human suffering and the fundamental right to development. Moreover, such measures obstructed access to vital resources in times of crisis, in direct contravention of the Charter of the United Nations, constituting a stark violation of international law and demonstrating total disregard for the sovereign equality of States and the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs.

113. Inter-State dialogue, including within human rights institutions, had become increasingly political. Blame and hypocrisy were hindering progress. It was time to abandon self-righteousness and embrace a more frank and cooperative approach to foster respectful engagement among States. Human rights institutions should operate based on the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and seek to address the historical injustices that had resulted in stark disparities among countries. They should also foster trust and credibility by promoting constructive dialogue and cooperation and resisting exploitation for political purposes.

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

115. **Ms. Lelisa** (Lesotho) said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights continued to exert a moral, political and legal influence. Since its adoption in 1948, the fundamentals for promoting and protecting human rights had largely been established, including a body of international human rights laws and standards, as well as institutions to interpret them, monitor compliance and apply them to new and emerging issues. With a view to implementing the provisions of the Declaration, as well as the recommendations made during its third cycle of the universal periodic review, Lesotho had made progress on equality and non-discrimination by promulgating laws that safeguarded the equal status of men and women in various settings.

116. States should engage with the special mechanisms of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and extend standing invitations to all its thematic special procedure mandate holders. In that vein, a member of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development had visited Lesotho in January 2023 and discussions of the findings had taken place in April and September of the same year.

117. The State party reporting system was an important tool, allowing States to assess what they had achieved and what more could be done to promote and protect human rights. The process encouraged and facilitated public participation and scrutiny of States' policies, laws and programmes. The implementation by Lesotho of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights had been reviewed by the Human Rights Committee in July 2023 and her country was the process of implementing the Committee's concluding observations.

118. Human rights were interrelated, interdependent and indivisible, and should be treated in a fair and equal manner. States should therefore refrain from emphasizing some rights and disregarding others, as that adversely affected certain groups. Lesotho remained strongly committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and would endeavour to advance its implementation, in particular through tangible efforts at the domestic level.

119. **Mr. Balobaid** (Yemen) said that his Government was committed to upholding international human rights covenants and instruments, as well as national legislation. Since its formation, the Presidential Leadership Council had adopted measures to restore peace and stability in Yemen, including a comprehensive reform of the human rights architecture. To that end, it had implemented transparent public review policies, reconstituted the Supreme Judiciary Council and appointed new Supreme Court justices. The Government of Yemen continued to abide by the humanitarian truce and was seeking to achieve an inclusive and sustainable peace based on agreed reference points. By contrast, the Houthi militias refused to implement the provisions of the truce. It was important to open crossings between all Yemeni cities and, in particular, to lift the siege of the city of Ta'izz. The militias continued their attacks on civilians and camps for internally displaced persons in various governorates.

120. Militia activity was exacerbating the humanitarian situation. The international community should exert pressure on the Houthi militias to stop committing human rights violations, targeting vital installations and

infrastructure, recruiting children, oppressing religious minorities, arresting academics and activists, and preventing women from working. Recently, the Houthi authorities had conducted mass arrests of Yemeni citizens celebrating the anniversary of the 26 September revolution. The militias must abide by the terms of the truce and cooperate with the United Nations to achieve a sustainable solution.

121. The Israeli occupation army had subjected the people of Gaza to barbaric aggression, leaving thousands of civilians dead or injured and cutting off supplies of electricity, oil, fuel and food. The unprecedented catastrophe unfolding as a result constituted a war crime and a crime against humanity. Most recently, the deliberate bombing of a hospital had injured hundreds of innocent civilians seeking treatment there. The international community, the Security Council and international organizations must protect the human rights of the Palestinian people. Such crimes contravened the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law.

122. His delegation called upon the international community to condemn the targeting and murder of civilians and the violations of human rights law, for civilians to be protected and for an immediate ceasefire to allow humanitarian assistance to reach the people of Gaza.

123. **Mr. Luemba** (Angola) said that, in its Constitution, Angola promoted and defended fundamental rights and freedoms and ensured that they were respected and implemented by the legislative, executive and judicial authorities. The promotion and protection of human rights had been part of the story of Angola since its struggle for independence from colonial domination. Its human rights strategy was based on the principle that every person in the world had rights and freedoms, regardless of race, gender, nationality, religion or any other characteristic.

124. At the national level, the Government of Angola had taken steps such as reinforcing access to health, education, land and housing, promoting education on human rights, involving public and private institutions, and strengthening dialogue with civil society. It had established a national commission on the implementation of the Reconciliation Plan in Memory of the Victims of Political Conflicts tasked with honouring those who had died in the conflict between 1975 and 2002. Furthermore, it had created an annual award for entities, organizations and people that championed human rights at the national level.

125. Angola advocated for the promotion of universality, the inalienable right to self-determination,

dignity, non-discrimination, equality and social inclusion. It therefore encouraged Member States to defend and promote human rights at the national and international levels and to sign and ratify the relevant international legal instruments.

126. **Mr. Muñoz** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that, for over 900 years, the Sovereign Order of Malta had upheld human dignity and aided those in need, regardless of background or belief, through its extensive medical, social and humanitarian work. In the aftermath of the earthquake in Morocco in September 2023, it had provided nourishing meals, along with essential provisions, bedding and personal hygiene items, to affected families and communities. Special consideration had been given to the needs of women, who had received sanitary products.

127. The Order's French association had donated over \$250,000 to Caritas Internationalis, enhancing the humanitarian relief efforts. It was currently partnering with Caritas Internationalis to provide direct food assistance to the Moroccan population, with teams on the ground conducting real-time assessments to tailor relief efforts and respond effectively to evolving community needs.

128. According to Pope Francis, every person was called to contribute, with courage and determination, based on his or her role, to respect for the fundamental rights of every individual, including those who were invisible, hungry and thirsty, naked, sick, strangers or prisoners, and those living on the margins of society or excluded from it.

129. **Ms. Aultman** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that the Federation and its 191 national societies were appalled at the escalation of violence and human misery that had unfolded in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, including the attack on the Ahli Arab Hospital. The network was committed to providing lifesaving relief to all who were suffering. Humanitarian organizations must be given access and protection to do that work.

130. Migration was a fundamental yet complex human experience. While many people migrated in search of opportunities, many others were forced to leave their homes and families by violence and conflict, exclusion, limited access to essential services and, increasingly, climate-related disasters. The number of migrants crossing the Darién Gap and the Mediterranean had doubled in 2023. Too many migrants were being forced to make long and dangerous journeys and were facing abuse, discrimination and a lack of essential services.

131. Governments had the right to set their migration policies and manage their borders, but many were failing in their obligations to save lives, prevent death and serious harm, and protect the human rights and dignity of migrants. Despite those increasingly challenging circumstances, the Federation was providing humanitarian protection and assistance to migrants and displaced persons in countries of origin, transit and destination, regardless of their legal status or background.

132. The international community needed to work collectively in order to save lives, including by prioritizing and cooperating in search and rescue operations; to ensure that all migrants, regardless of status, had access to essential services throughout their journey; and to put a stop actions that obstructed or criminalized humanitarian efforts to offer protection and assistance.

133. **Mr. del Valle Blanco** (Observer for the International Youth Organization for Ibero-America) said that international cooperation among young people had led to significant achievements in recent years owing to the prevalence of youth issues in national and international politics. His organization had promoted a cycle of collaboration and co-creation with respect to services, leveraging the comparative advantages enjoyed by the relevant institutions when young people were treated as agents of change. In its new youth agenda, it had presented a series of objectives and strategies on topics including human rights and citizenship designed to advance a regional youth agenda based on the rights of young people and sustainable development. The main aim was to promote young people's rights, with an emphasis on participation, protection, prevention and monitoring in relation to peacebuilding.

134. Young people's role as peacebuilders and their inclusion in decision-making were key to conflict resolution and prevention. The Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth and its Additional Protocol served as an important tool for the incorporation of such rights into the legal frameworks of Ibero-American countries. His organization was in favour of the implementation of the treaty and increased authority for national youth organizations. It also supported intersectionality and a rights- and evidence-based approach to the management of comprehensive public policies.

135. His organization promoted a vision rooted in human rights, gender equality and sustainable development, in which young people were treated as key

actors in the peacebuilding process and encouraged to actively participate in decision-making.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.