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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

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

- (a) Implementation of human rights instruments** (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** (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** (A/78/36)

1. **Mr. Okafor** (Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity) said that his report (A/78/176) presented an overview of the activities he had undertaken during his term as a mandate holder from August 2017 to October 2023.

2. His first report to the Third Committee (see A/73/206) had covered human rights-based international solidarity in the context of global migration, with a focus on issues at the intersection of international solidarity, human rights and the longstanding and ongoing challenge of human migration.

3. In his 2019 report (see A/74/185), he had considered solidarity in global refugee protection, in the light of related issues facing the world at that time and the recent adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees. As that report had made clear, the perceived refugee protection crisis was actually a crisis of equitable

responsibility sharing, rooted in States' unwillingness to accept sufficient numbers of refugees rather than the overall number of people needing protection.

4. The theme of his third report (see A/75/180), presented in 2020, had been the threat posed by rising populism to the enjoyment or realization of the human rights of vulnerable individuals and groups. He had analysed the ascendancy of certain types of populist movements and presented examples of effective efforts to counter them.

5. In his 2021 report (see A/76/176), he had explored how international solidarity served to advance human rights within the context of economic security and insecurity, highlighting the fact that economic security was inherently intertwined with the right to live a dignified life. The 2022 report (see A/77/173) had focused on the extent to which States had exhibited global vaccine solidarity in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

6. With respect to the reports presented to the Human Rights Council, the first (see A/HRC/38/40) had enumerated most of his thematic priorities for his tenure, although subsequent changes had been necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. His second report (see A/HRC/41/44) had focused on compliance with international law and international humanitarian law amid efforts to criminalize and suppress the activities of human rights activists and other humanitarian actors who showed solidarity with migrants and refugees.

8. In 2020, he had produced a report on international solidarity in the context of climate change (see A/HRC/44/44), examining how an approach based on human rights could play a role in the response to climate change and how the absence of such an approach exacerbated the associated challenges.

9. His fourth report (see A/HRC/47/31) explored how international solidarity had, or had not, been expressed by States and other actors in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In his fifth report, presented in 2022 (see A/HRC/50/37), he had considered whether, and to what extent, the right to international solidarity required States to protect, respect, fulfil and otherwise implement their human rights obligations extraterritorially.

10. Lastly, he had presented a report to the Human Rights Council in June 2023 (see A/HRC/53/32) on his efforts to revise the existing draft declaration on the right to international solidarity, which he urged all Member States to support.

11. **Ms. Novruz** (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that, during the eighteenth Summit of the Movement, held in October 2019 in Baku, Heads of State and Government had recognized that solidarity was a broad concept that encompassed peaceful coexistence, equity and the empowerment of developing countries.

12. If any one of the States members of the Movement suffered economic, political or military harm, harm to their security, or harm owing to the politicization of human rights or the imposition of unilateral sanctions or embargoes, the Movement was determined to express its solidarity with the affected country through political, moral, material and other forms of assistance. To that end, the Movement would, when necessary, continue to review existing mechanisms and consider new ways to render such assistance. The Movement was firmly opposed to all unilateral coercive measures, including those used to exert political or economic pressure against any country, in particular developing countries, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules and principles of international law. Under no circumstances should people be deprived of the means of subsistence and development.

13. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the Independent Expert had raised important topics during his mandate, highlighting how solidarity and human rights effected positive societal changes, including within the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, and generated tangible national and international efforts to strengthen human rights.

14. Given the repercussions of the pandemic and other difficult circumstances, he wished to hear the Independent Expert's views on the devastating impact of unilateral coercive measures on human rights. He asked how international solidarity could help to mitigate and ultimately alleviate its effects, and whether it was even possible to talk of solidarity when the subject was routinely ignored or treated with indifference by certain States.

15. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that her country recognized the close link between international solidarity and the right to development. Realizing that right required solidarity and effective international cooperation in order to provide countries with the resources they needed to develop and to overcome obstacles. A global partnership, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 17, would improve countries' access to development aid and bolster their own capacities. That would entail channelling official development assistance to the regions in greatest need,

which had proven vital in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

16. Economic security and insecurity largely determined the extent to which individuals around the world were able to enjoy many of their human rights. However, there were still those who opposed the inclusion of international solidarity in the body of human rights norms.

17. **Ms. Cañedo** (Cuba) said that few situations had demonstrated the importance of international solidarity, cooperation and multilateralism as clearly as the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite its status as a small island developing State and the cruel embargo imposed by the United States of America for over six decades, Cuba had supported 42 countries between May 2020 and September 2022, in particular through the provision of specialized medical assistance. The United States had responded to that genuine example of international solidarity and South-South cooperation with a campaign to discredit the medical assistance provided by Cuba. In so doing, it had hindered and jeopardized the access of millions of people worldwide to high-quality services. It would be valuable to hear his opinion on the impact of unilateral coercive measures and the politicization of human rights in the context of international solidarity.

18. **Mr. Nena** (Lesotho) said that his delegation was committed to upholding the principle of international solidarity and called upon all Member States to scale up efforts to overcome the structural obstacles that generated and perpetuated poverty and inequality.

19. He was grateful to the Independent Expert for implementing the recommendations made by the Group of African States and for convening global consultations in Geneva in January 2023, during which States and other stakeholders had considered the text of the proposed revised draft declaration. His delegation supported the revision of the existing draft resolution in the light of recent developments, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the worsening of crises such as climate change, poverty and the ill-treatment of migrants.

20. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that overcoming the various challenges facing the world required genuine collective effort, constructive and depoliticized dialogue, and respect for the sovereignty and legitimate interests of States. Unfortunately, a number of States were undermining the principles of international law, tailoring the law to their own geopolitical interests and disregarding the Charter of the United Nations. His delegation categorically rejected the shameful practice of using unilateral coercive measures to exert pressure on independent countries.

21. The report on migration was particularly topical because irresponsible and egotistical actions on the part of European Union and coastal States members of the European Union had turned the Mediterranean Sea into a graveyard for thousands of African migrants. Western States had exhibited the same egotistical attitude during the pandemic by failing to provide inexpensive vaccines to those who needed them.

22. **Ms. Salem** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that rallies had taken place in many parts of the world in solidarity with the Palestinian people, to protest against indiscriminate Israeli attacks on civilians and to call for an immediate ceasefire. She urged Governments, officials, parliamentarians and the media not to serve a narrow, extreme, right-wing and populist electoral agenda by suggesting that such rallies pitted Islam against Judaism or Arabs against non-Arabs. Protesters of every faith and nationality rejected the injustice and oppression being endured by the Palestinian people.

23. Her delegation was concerned that certain Governments were attempting to criminalize and suppress expressions of solidarity with the Palestinian people, thereby fuelling racism, xenophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. She welcomed court rulings reversing such laws and practices, which ran counter to democracy, freedom of speech, the right to peaceful assembly and international solidarity. She thanked those who supported the Palestinian people and their human rights, including their right to self-determination.

24. **Mr. Yang Fan** (China) said that his country was consistently and unequivocally committed to safeguarding international solidarity, promoting a global community with a shared future and jointly building a better world. Advancing the global cause of human rights required solidarity rather than division and cooperation rather than confrontation.

25. As the Independent Expert had noted in his report, international solidarity was not only a right but also an obligation. China called upon all countries to comply with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to cooperate with respect to human rights on the basis of equality and mutual respect, to oppose the politicization and instrumentalization of human rights, and to take specific measures to contribute to human rights undertakings around the world.

26. **Mr. Buckley** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that the rights of peoples and individuals should be respected and championed in every jurisdiction. The humanitarian relief agency Malteser International had collaborated with a variety of

stakeholders on projects to address such needs as water, sanitation and hygiene in Africa, Asia and the Americas. It had also undertaken a number of initiatives in Iraq over the years, including programmes focused on female empowerment and self-reliance.

27. The COVID-19 pandemic had underscored how vital it was for all actors to recognize and act on their responsibility to provide cross-border humanitarian support. The Independent Expert was right to highlight the importance of achieving global equality while respecting each State's sovereignty and disregarding other geopolitical motives.

28. **Mr. Okafor** (Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity) said that he and previous mandate holders attached great importance to the potential adoption of the draft declaration. No human rights instrument could solve all of the world's problems immediately, but it was nonetheless an extremely important resource. In his various reports, he had cited many examples of how similar texts had been used effectively to protect and promote human rights around the world. It was vital that work on the possible adoption of the document should continue at the earliest possible opportunity through an intergovernmental process.

29. International solidarity helped to mitigate the impact of unnecessary, inappropriate or overly broad unilateral coercive measures. Excessively broad sanctions had an impact on the enjoyment of human rights in States because they affected individuals who had not been specifically targeted. The efforts made to address that issue were sorely lacking.

30. Insufficient international solidarity in climate change texts was the key problem with climate change work, including as it related to the enjoyment of human rights. The stalling of the climate fund negotiations was a case in point. It was not his place to apportion blame, but any situation in which the poorest bore the brunt of circumstances mostly caused by the richest illustrated his position.

31. The right of individuals and peoples to international solidarity could be included in the current body of human rights because it was already accepted, to a certain degree, within existing human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Even if that were not the case, no generation of human rights ever looked like the one before. Economic and social rights did not resemble civil and political rights. Similarly, third-generation rights, such as the right to the environment, were not the same as those established previously. Human rights tended to reflect the wishes of the

international community, and there was therefore no a priori reason why such a right could not be permitted.

32. **Ms. Waris** (Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights), introducing her report (A/78/179), said that progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals had already been behind schedule before the COVID-19 pandemic. The world was emerging from that crisis, but standards of living were dropping, currencies were being devalued, many countries were failing to pay interest on their debts and debt bonds were being assigned junk status.

33. In her report, she addressed the various crises facing the world and sought to ascertain the extent to which they were global or regional in nature. Examples included global poverty, which had increased for the first time in 20 years, and pandemic-related job losses. In 2021, over 70 per cent of all people experiencing crises or catastrophes had been located in 10 countries affected by food crisis: Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Some countries had introduced positive laws and policies to promote e-commerce and the digital economy, but those were primarily affecting companies rather than individuals.

34. Climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss were having adverse impacts, leaving 700 million people at risk of displacement due to severe water scarcity by 2030. Homelessness was affecting many, including 45 million people in countries undergoing food crisis. The perennial problem of armed conflicts and humanitarian crises was having global repercussions, which were made harder to solve by the existence of a war economy.

35. Financial actors such as asset managers, commercial banks, insurance companies and lending institutions were exerting greater influence over economic governance. While there had been calls for more multistakeholder interactions, many groups saw the situation as a crisis of transparency, accountability and responsibility.

36. The current state of the global economy and lack of fiscal cooperation was leading to a retrogression in human rights from a fiscal perspective. Change was vital, and there were a number of important trends to highlight in that regard. Exports were in decline globally and COVID-19 was affecting trade, development and foreign direct investment flows across the world.

37. The total value of assets held by banks or investment institutions had increased by almost 6 per cent since 2012, with 80 per cent of those assets held in developed countries. A just transfer of global financial assets was essential; a transfer of 1.1 per cent could be enough to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in developing countries and close the financing gap. However, a global fiscal body was needed to ensure coordination, cooperation and assistance. Solutions were being put forward by the technology sector and the World Trade Organization, and companies must adapt in order to provide services remotely. However, the lack of social protection for the labour force was a major cause for concern.

38. The only way forward was to uphold an inclusive, rules-based multilateral system to unify the international community and encourage coordination. Among potential solutions recommended as a matter of priority, it was important to consider the economy from the perspective of human rights and to introduce a more progressive tax system that would increase revenue for the State without penalizing the vulnerable and the poor. A focus was needed on systemic sustainability and equal access to public services such as health care, education and pensions, and sovereign wealth funds could be used to mitigate the effects of unexpected shocks. States should foster societal trust; multilateral organizations should increase their concessional lending capacity, reconsider their financial conditions, extend repayment terms and give longer grace periods on interest payments. A global fiscal authority and an international tax cooperation framework should be established.

39. **Ms. García Hernández** (Cuba) said that it was essential to redistribute the wealth generated by economies and to use those resources to promote and protect human rights, eliminate poverty and inequality, and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The impact of external debt, in particular on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and the achievement of the right to development, was undeniable. The current international order, characterized by opaque and undemocratic financial institutions, simply perpetuated the privileges of wealthy countries at the expense of poorer States in the global South. External debt played a vital role within that system by exerting pressure on developing countries in order to serve geopolitical or strategic interests. In order to move towards a fairer system, it was essential to reduce inequality, foster multilateralism and strengthen international cooperation. However, rather than encouraging multilateralism, certain countries were choosing to impose unilateral coercive measures, which had an adverse effect on human rights

and countries' ability to repay external debt. Her delegation called upon the Independent Expert to examine the impact of unilateralism and unilateral coercive measures in particular, such as the commercial, economic and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States.

40. **Ms. DeGregory** (Bahamas) said that, as a small island developing State, her country faced unique challenges as a result of the compounding effects of climate, debt and health crises. Vulnerability indicators other than income status should be used to determine financing eligibility and access to global safety nets. The universal membership of the United Nations made it an appropriate forum in which to shape and adjust global fiscal architecture; thus, negotiations on international tax cooperation should continue through the United Nations, ensuring that all countries could participate equally. The Bahamas would continue its efforts to enhance oversight of its financial system and would welcome recommendations on how to further strengthen supervision and detect illicit financial flows.

41. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that there was an urgent need to reform the international financial architecture. Unfortunately, international financial institutions, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization were not people-centred. As a result, their policies and programmes were exacerbating poverty and having a negative impact on crucial sectors in developing countries, such as health, education, water, energy and other social services.

42. The Secretary-General had made a number of proposals with respect to reforming and strengthening global economic governance. She would like to know if the Independent Expert had recommendations on finding a lasting solution to the issue of debt and how she would respond to those who believed that the United Nations General Assembly was not the appropriate forum for such discussions, or who were against an international tax convention negotiated by the United Nations. Further clarification of the concept of the human rights-based economy, and how it could be implemented in a way that bolstered economic, social and cultural rights, would be appreciated.

43. **Mr. Nena** (Lesotho) said that foreign debt had become an enormous burden for many developing States, with \$500–600 billion lost annually through debt servicing. The various crises facing the world, including climate change, COVID-19, the global energy crisis and armed conflicts, had reversed progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, which remained out of reach for many countries, especially in Africa.

44. Foreign debt made recovery even more challenging. The COVID-19 pandemic had exposed the physical vulnerabilities of Governments and caused an upsurge in borrowing to recover essential health and welfare expenditure. Debt constraints had the greatest impact on developing countries such as Lesotho, hindering efforts to eradicate poverty and realize economic, social and cultural rights.

45. It was more important than ever for the international community to ensure its systems were better prepared for future emergencies. The climate crisis had a disproportionate impact on the least developed States, with extreme weather events often leaving countries trapped in a cycle of debt. His delegation therefore agreed that preserving, protecting, upholding and securing human rights in times of uncertainty was crucial.

46. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that the report accurately reflected the main negative trends in world affairs. Recent crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, had compounded pre-existing economic issues and deepened inequality in many countries, necessitating additional measures to ensure economic and social rights as well as the right to development. States needed to honour their commitment to protect, promote and implement economic and social rights in order to provide every member of society with equal opportunities.

47. Overcoming poverty, lowering unemployment and reducing the debt burden on developing States should remain focal points. The Bretton Woods institutions, in particular the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, were not taking issues such as advancing development and upholding human rights into account. States should continue to consider reforming those institutions, as had been discussed during the global financial crisis of 2008, and make collective efforts to change external economic conditions.

48. **Mr. Yang Fan** (China) said that countries should step up cooperation, formulate people-centred economic policies, promote human rights through development and build a community with a shared future. China was providing assistance to other developing countries in such areas as poverty reduction, food security and climate change, and helping recipient States to promote and safeguard the rights of their citizens. It had fully implemented the Debt Service Suspension Initiative. In addition, its global development initiative was designed to foster inclusiveness, meet the needs of developing countries and address uneven and inadequate development between and within States.

49. Developed economies should adopt responsible fiscal and monetary policies to avoid negative spillover effects. Unilateralism and protectionism severely undermined the global supply chain, worsened the international development environment, and had an irreversible impact on the economic recovery and the realization of the right to development. The international community should firmly oppose unilateral sanctions and protect the human rights of people in targeted countries. The international financial system should be made fairer and more equitable, ensuring greater representation of emerging markets and increased funding for developing countries.

50. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that paragraphs 40 and 41 of the Independent Expert's report stated that Egypt had had to cancel its social housing subsidy for low-income households due to external debt of \$157 billion. However, he wondered whether the issue had in fact been the requirements imposed by the World Bank.

51. After the earthquake of February 2023, it had been suggested that the World Bank could provide financial aid to Syria and Türkiye. Syria was offered approximately \$100 million on the condition that it paid its dues to the World Bank. Its offer to pay using frozen assets held in the United States had been opposed by the Administration there. As an alternative, Syria had been invited to send a delegation to the annual meeting of the board of the World Bank in Washington D.C. However, that was impossible owing to the restrictions imposed on Syrian diplomats by the United States.

52. **Ms. Waris** (Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights), said that her report to the Human Rights Council in March 2023 had covered the implications of digital fiscal systems and how they affected and were affected by unilateral coercive measures. She was concerned that global transactions occurring in only one currency would concentrate considerable power in one space or country. She was advocating for the establishment of an international financial body in part because such conversations should take place within a neutral global forum where the existence, exchange and movement of currencies could be discussed and the impact on levels of poverty and vulnerability could be addressed.

53. In the absence of such a platform, the emergence of multiple informal and unregulated systems was fuelling criminality. Societies were responding to the inherent power imbalance by seeking to protect

themselves from poverty and vulnerability, causing tension from a human rights perspective.

54. Regarding vulnerability indicators, one of the biggest ongoing challenges facing international financial institutions was how to decide whether a country did or did not qualify as developing. Indicators based on human rights were not in use. She encouraged delegates to read her correspondence with the head of the International Monetary Fund, confirming that human rights were not part of that organization's mandate. In the absence of a global tax or fiscal body, it was clear that there would be separate entities working in siloes with differing and diverse mandates. She would consider how to develop a vulnerability index and encouraged States to contribute to that process.

55. She wished to set out the parameters of a global fiscal body because addressing financial issues individually made it difficult for States to bring debates and discussions together and prevented the adoption of a holistic approach. Human rights could serve as a roadmap because they ensured that what was most important – human beings, especially the vulnerable and the poor – remained the central focus. Conversations on topics such as finance, debt, tax, official development assistance, governmental revenue and royalties could therefore revolve around making people's lives better. The trade-off between debt and the Sustainable Development Goals was a persistent issue and another reason why a global fiscal body would be valuable.

56. It was no longer possible to talk about maintaining the status quo or advancing human rights. Instead, she focused on how to prevent retrogression. Social services and fundamental rights, including the right to a fair trial, access to information and civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, were moving backwards because the financial resources allocated to them were no longer enough to improve lives or lifestyles around the world.

57. Conversations on reforming international financial institutions were longstanding and ongoing. The attempt to introduce a gender-based strategy to the International Monetary Fund seemed to have stalled. The fact that it was such a struggle for a global institution of that size to incorporate a single rights-based issue did not bode well for the introduction of other priorities, such as those relating to food, health or education.

58. The situation described by the delegation of Syria reflected a pattern in which one country imposed sanctions and froze assets, leaving the target country unable to pay membership dues to the United Nations and deprived of voting rights. According to economists, it had previously taken between three and five years for

a financial decision made in one country to ripple out to the rest of the world. As a result of digitization, the effects were more immediate and detrimental. If a large economy changed its interest rates, for example, smaller neighbouring economies were adversely affected almost instantly and then on an ongoing basis.

59. A global fiscal body would be the appropriate forum in which to discuss such matters and ensure, for instance, that a stronger economy was not benefiting from holding the assets of a smaller State. In March 2023, the Human Rights Council had asked her to develop draft guidelines on the repatriation of States' assets from a human rights perspective, which she encouraged States to read. The global, neutral and mutually inclusive space in question could be the United Nations or a new body. However, creating a new body might not be financially feasible amid a global economic crisis. The rules on how economies were run at a domestic level should also be applied at the global level.

60. **Ms. Gaviria Betancur** (Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons), introducing her report ([A/78/245](#)), said that she had taken up the mandate at a critical inflection point for the rights of internally displaced persons. There were a record 71 million people living in internal displacement as a result of new conflicts and violence, natural disasters and a lack of accountability for human rights abuses. Without concerted action from all stakeholders, the situation was only likely to deteriorate. Rather than viewing internal displacement solely as a humanitarian crisis, it was crucial to recognize its direct connection to broader governance, development, human rights, climate change and peace challenges.

61. The four thematic priorities of her mandate were generalized violence, peace agreements, climate change and reintegration. She had selected those priorities in view of their relevance to a broad range of internal displacement situations and their impacts on all phases of the displacement cycle. She aimed to pursue an integrated and intersectional approach that considered the situation of various segments of the internally displaced population, including women, girls, children, young persons, LGBTIQI+ persons, persons of African descent, minorities, older persons and Indigenous Peoples.

62. Generalized violence encompassed a broad range of situations and perpetrators, including organized crime and violent extremism, as well as intercommunal clashes and violence. Applying international humanitarian and human rights law in such contexts was a major challenge, as non-State armed actors might

reject those frameworks, while States might disregard their human rights obligations.

63. During her tenure, she intended to explore how to effectively prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement in contexts of generalized violence, and examine measures to ensure accountability for perpetrators. She would also continue to promote the inclusion of internal displacement considerations in mediation, peace processes, peacebuilding and transitional justice in accordance with the Secretary-General's proposed New Agenda for Peace.

64. She would advocate for the full and meaningful participation of communities displaced in the context of climate change and communities at risk of such displacement as a result of mitigation and adaptation efforts. Planned relocations were becoming increasingly common in contexts where the anticipated effects of climate change would be particularly challenging to reverse. She would examine how to safeguard the human rights of those affected. Displacement in the context of climate change was not natural or inevitable, but rather stemmed from deliberate actions that had contributed to climate change and left certain communities without adequate resources to cope. She would therefore evaluate measures to address the unequal harms associated with climate change and provide remedy to victims, take stock of progress with respect to loss and damage facilities and explore more holistic climate justice initiatives.

65. Her final area of focus was the integration and reintegration of internally displaced persons. More attention should be paid to the subjective factors that enabled those formerly displaced to feel that their displacement had truly ended. Preserving and respecting their diverse identities, cultural heritage, languages, traditions and spiritual practices, providing mental health services and psychosocial support and creating an inclusive environment were important in fostering a sense of identity, belonging and resilience. As Special Rapporteur, she would listen closely to the needs and aspirations of internally displaced persons and work with States and other authorities on how to implement effective policies and actions.

66. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that economic and social rights were particularly relevant to the current discussion, since the rights of internally displaced persons to housing, food, health care, education and work were immediately affected. The same considerations should be prioritized in the context of return and reintegration. The majority of those persons lived in urban settings owing to the concentration of public services in towns and cities. The resulting burden

on such services sometimes caused tensions with host communities, as the Special Rapporteur had highlighted in her report. She asked whether the Special Rapporteur could share examples of successful integration.

67. In order for the internally displaced to return to their place of origin, the infrastructure for the provision of essential services such as water, energy, food, schooling and roads had to be repaired. The impact on the budget of the States in question could be considerable, since such costs were often unexpected. She asked how the Special Rapporteur planned to address overlapping humanitarian and development matters, especially with respect to the reconstruction process in their regions of origin.

68. **Ms. Al-mashehari** (Yemen) said that it was important to devise a comprehensive solution in order to alleviate the suffering of internally displaced persons, especially those who had been living in the camp in Aden since 2017. Her Government's national policy provided a framework for addressing internal migration and displacement in Yemen as a result of the attacks of Houthi militias and challenges such as climate change.

69. She asked how the Special Rapporteur would cooperate with the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement in the light of the Secretary-General's efforts to better support Governments by building partnerships with financing institutions and the private sector. She also requested further details on the mechanisms mentioned in paragraph 31 of the report, given that displacement was sometimes linked to conflicts and landmines.

70. **Ms. Mccauley** (Representative of the European Union in its capacity as observer) said that the European Union was a leading international donor in situations of forced displacement, with member States continuing to provide humanitarian assistance in countries including Syria, Colombia, South Sudan, Iraq, Myanmar, Yemen and Ukraine. She welcomed the efforts to advance a nexus between humanitarian development and peace, and to improve the coherence, complementarity and sustainability of related policies.

71. She asked how Member States could take preventive measures to support communities affected by situations of generalized violence or the adverse effects of climate change, and how communities with high numbers of the displaced could be helped to implement and strengthen disaster-preparedness measures.

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

73. **Ms. Rambøll** (Norway) said that her country supported the four thematic priorities identified by the

Special Rapporteur. Ensuring the human rights of internally displaced persons should be key to the international community's collective efforts. Similarly, adopting a perspective that reflected gender in all its diversity and recognized specific vulnerabilities was essential. It was also vital for internally displaced persons themselves to have a say in finding solutions. Norway strongly supported the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and stood ready to assist her in its implementation.

74. **Ms. Zoghbi** (Lebanon) said that continuous aggression and bombing by Israel of territories and villages in the south of her country had resulted in the displacement of 19,464 people in the affected region and across Lebanon. Her delegation called on the international community to put pressure on Israel to halt its daily violations of the sovereignty and territory of Lebanon and to end its aggression towards the country's territory, people and civilians. Such acts were flagrant violations of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, Security Council resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) and international humanitarian law.

75. **Ms. Tickner** (Colombia) said that her Government had established a robust legal and institutional framework to address the challenges associated with the internal displacement of over 8 million people. As highlighted by the Special Rapporteur and reflected in domestic policy, it was important to recognize and address the needs of groups within displaced populations who were at greater risk of discrimination and marginalization. Ensuring the meaningful participation of such groups shed light on the causes of their displacement and the effects on their lives, and facilitated the search for lasting solutions. Colombia had redoubled its efforts to promote that approach at the inter-State level and strengthen cooperation within the United Nations system. She asked how the Special Rapporteur could be assisted in her efforts to work with States to establish a legal standard for the participation of displaced persons.

76. **Mr. Yaseen** (Iraq) said that his country had a programme and national measures in place to ensure the voluntary and safe return of over 5 million internally displaced persons. Concerted efforts had been made to provide services and shelter, to address the issue of urban gangs, and to rebuild and demine cities. His delegation would be interested to hear the Special Rapporteur's assessment of the experiences of Iraq and whether they could be of benefit to countries facing similar challenges. He asked how international financial support could be provided to countries that lacked the resources to address internal displacement caused by climate change and water scarcity.

77. **Mr. Nena** (Lesotho) said that internally displaced persons were susceptible to multiple forms of human rights violations, with certain groups particularly at risk owing to explicit targeting on the part of criminals or extremist groups. It was therefore vital for Governments to be reminded of their duty under international law to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of every individual, irrespective of status. His country had established a constitutional right to equality and ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). It was also drawing inspiration from the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

78. **Ms. Lortkipanidze** (Georgia) said that almost 300,000 people had been expelled from the Russian-occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali as a result of multiple waves of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Russian Federation since 1991. While her Government was making every effort to improve their social and economic integration and living conditions, no major changes had been made with regard to them exercising their right to return.

79. The European Court of Human Rights had ruled that Russia was responsible for violating the right of internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their homes, and concluded that it had an obligation to enable their safe and dignified return under the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights). She asked the Special Rapporteur to explain how existing international instruments and guidelines could be used to ensure tangible results and progress for internally displaced persons.

80. **Mr. Zlenko** (Ukraine) said that the distressing phenomenon of internal displacement had been an issue for his country since the start of Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014. Before 24 February 2022, almost 1.5 million people had been internally displaced. The full-scale Russian invasion had then created the largest displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Over 11 million Ukrainians remained displaced, while around 4.7 million had returned to their place of habitual residence. Ongoing intimidation, reprisals and unlawful practices in the occupied territories of Ukraine had led to demographic changes and increased the number of the internally displaced. Given the magnitude of the challenges facing them in Ukraine, he urged the Special Rapporteur to pay due attention to such issues in her activities. He asked what international organizations, and the United Nations in particular, could do to enhance respect for, protection of

and fulfilment of the human rights of internally displaced persons caught up in armed conflicts.

81. **Mr. Khairunsyah** (Indonesia) said that his country had extensive experience of disaster displacement, having faced eight large-scale natural disasters in the previous two decades. Over 150,000 people had been displaced by the 2018 tsunami alone. His Government had introduced legislation to safeguard the rights of affected individuals and communities. However, the country's capacity to prevent and respond to climate-related disaster displacement in the coming years would depend on the scale, drivers and impact of individual events and the resources allocated to addressing that phenomenon. He asked what measures countries could take to ensure that the protection and promotion of the rights of internally displaced persons in post-emergency situations were an integral part of humanitarian assistance efforts.

82. **Ms. Desigis** (Switzerland) said that the protection of human rights should guide efforts to achieve lasting solutions for communities affected by internal displacement. In accordance with the principle of leaving no one behind, all work should take specific vulnerabilities linked to gender, age, disability and ethnic factors into consideration. Her delegation welcomed the report's focus on climate change as a risk multiplier and the recognition of the importance of including internally displaced persons in mediation and peace processes. It also supported the call for multi-actor approaches based on close collaboration with affected States, the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement, local authorities and civil society. She asked whether the Special Rapporteur could recommend ways in which the global system could be adjusted to enhance the protection and human rights of internally displaced persons.

83. **Mr. Abdullah** (Bangladesh) said that camps for internally displaced persons in Myanmar were one of the major obstacles to the creation of an environment conducive to the return of Rohingyas to their place of origin. He asked how the Special Rapporteur's office planned to engage with Myanmar on the dismantling of the camps and the reintegration of the Rohingyas into mainstream society.

84. Climate-vulnerable countries were adopting mitigation and adaptation measures to address the adverse impacts of climate change but facing multifaceted challenges such as providing accommodation and income-generating opportunities. He asked for examples of instances in which the United Nations was

helping climate-vulnerable countries to overcome such challenges.

85. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation broadly agreed with the Special Rapporteur's proposed agenda for her mandate, although it was unclear whether the link between climate change and internal displacement warranted the same attention as other issues. Her wealth of experience would enable her to consider internal displacement not only as a humanitarian crisis but also from the perspective of governance, development and human rights. He categorically rejected the baseless accusations of human rights violations made by the delegations of Georgia and Ukraine.

86. **Mr. McGlothlin** (United States of America) said that his delegation welcomed the Special Rapporteur's focus on incorporating the voices of internally displaced persons in peace negotiations and processes. To be truly sustainable and deliver better humanitarian outcomes, peacebuilding efforts must reflect their needs and encourage their participation, including women, children and members of marginalized and underserved communities.

87. The decision to focus on the impact of climate change on displacement was to be applauded. The United States supported efforts to help communities to anticipate such impacts and take swift and appropriate action to protect people, land and infrastructure. States must continue to assess solutions and challenges for internally displaced persons and measure their progress. He asked how the international community could better integrate their voices into peace processes.

88. **Mr. Elhamriti** (Morocco) said that armed groups and non-State actors were worsening conditions for the internally displaced, threatening peace and security, and undermining the development of human rights protections. With the permission of host countries, such groups should allow the Special Rapporteur to visit sites where they were being held in order to examine and report on conditions. That practice would increase accountability, ensure the involvement of all parties and prevent impunity in the event of violations. His delegation wished to know what actions had been undertaken to register internally displaced persons in accordance with international humanitarian law and how host countries could be encouraged to provide assistance and support in that regard.

89. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that 1.7 million people had been driven out of their homes since the illegal military coup in his country in February 2021. The total number of internally displaced persons currently stood at nearly 2 million and over 18 million people were in

need of humanitarian assistance. The military junta was preventing life-saving aid from reaching the camps, thereby worsening conditions and leaving them vulnerable to trafficking in persons. A recent aerial attack on a camp in Laiza, Kachin state, had killed 30 civilians and injured many more. He urged the international community to take decisive action against the military junta and asked what the United Nations and its Member States could do to help internally displaced persons and alleviate their suffering.

90. **Mr. Yang Fan** (China) said that it was important to reflect upon the reasons why the numbers of the displaced stood at a record high. Certain countries had started wars around the world and used unilateral coercive measures indiscriminately under the guise of democracy, resulting in the mass displacement of innocent civilians. Moreover, racism had intensified in some countries, leading to a low rate of home ownership among persons of African descent. His delegation called upon such countries to fulfil their obligations under international law and seek sustainable and inclusive solutions to internal displacement through conflict prevention, economic development and peacebuilding. China had strengthened protections for vulnerable groups and continued to refine its provisions on minimum subsistence and housing assistance for internally displaced persons. It stood ready to work with the international community on that issue.

91. **Ms. Gaviria Betancur** (Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons) said that she intended to promote cross-regional sharing of lessons learned and best practices, since many of the countries represented had first-hand experience of the challenges associated with internal displacement. Reconstruction costs should be integrated into national and local development plans, provided that there was a shared goal in place, as well as support from the international community, donor countries and the United Nations to help States in their efforts to rebuild and to resolve internal displacement.

92. She was building on the work of her predecessor and drawing on over 30 years of experience in building up robust international legal practices in various countries. Furthermore, she was cooperating closely with the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement, in particular with respect to the implementation of the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.

93. Various countries had developed good practices with respect to accountability, the inclusion of internal displacement considerations in transitional justice mechanisms and peace agreements, and the evaluation

of the implementation of peace agreements. At the international level, she intended to promote practices that ensured the involvement of internally displaced persons in negotiations and peace and mediation processes.

94. Prevention would be a key focus of her work, as would early warning mechanisms and systems, which could help to identify potential triggers for displacement, such as conflicts and natural disasters. It was also possible to significantly reduce the likelihood of displacement by addressing the root causes of conflicts and investing in peacebuilding.

95. The best way for Member States to support communities with high numbers of displacement was through international solidarity and the provision of flexible and predictable funding. It was important to adopt approaches centred on area-based development and human rights and to eliminate discrimination on the basis of status. Comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategies, such as the improvement of infrastructure resilience, early warning systems and planned relocations, were proven to minimize the impact of natural disasters on communities. Community preparedness programmes had been successfully introduced in various contexts and she intended to dedicate a significant amount of her mandate to that issue.

96. States could also take action by establishing social protection programmes and supporting vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons. Many countries had adopted laws and frameworks to enshrine an index of rights and she intended to promote that practice at the international level. Legal and policy frameworks had proven successful from the perspective of mitigation and prevention, but effective responses to crises also required capacity-building, political will, resources and planning.

97. Human rights instruments and those rooted in international humanitarian law existed to protect persons displaced because of conflict. The United Nations was working to ensure the protection and fulfilment of human rights by monitoring conflicts and human rights violations.

98. As many delegations had noted, the participation of internally displaced persons was vital. Participatory and inclusive processes based on human rights had proven effective in post-emergency situations. Moreover, they laid the groundwork for the protection of human rights during subsequent phases.

99. The year 2023 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal

Displacement, in which regions were encouraged to adopt provisions such as those seen in the Kampala Convention. Incorporating such provisions into national legislation was highly recommended. She would continue to urge the relevant authorities to safeguard human rights in the specific situations raised by a number of delegations, including that of Myanmar. Camp closures alone would not create conditions conducive to the return of the displaced. She would follow up on camp closures to ensure that plans were in place to protect internally displaced persons and their human rights.

100. Addressing the issue of internal displacement was challenging work, requiring the cooperation and collaboration of the various States, regional organizations and civil society. Moreover, it was vital to take the voices, needs, suggestions, ideas and solutions of internally displaced persons themselves into account.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.