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Chair: Mr. Marschik (Austria)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 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/78/316, A/78/326, A/78/327, A/78/338, A/78/340, A/78/358, A/78/375, A/78/511, A/78/526 and A/78/527)

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

1. **Ms. Carmeli** (Israel), speaking as a youth delegate, said that she had helped to build a diverse and unique community near the Gaza Strip, despite the security challenges facing Israel in the area and the indiscriminate rocket shelling from Gaza that had affected such communities since Israel had disengaged from the Gaza Strip in 2005. Like others, she had chosen to live in that community because life should not be dictated by terror.

2. However, on 7 October 2023, while celebrating the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, those communities had suffered a heinous attack carrying a message of hate and fear. The terrorists of Hamas had come with guns and grenades, purposely killing and wounding families and abducting over 200 innocent Israeli citizens without distinction, mercy or a shred of humanity.

3. Israel was in a war not against civilians or individuals, but against the terror organization Hamas, which was holding 200 kidnapped persons, many of whom were in need of medical treatment, and denying their most basic rights, in absolute contradiction of international law and in a manner that placed their lives in extreme danger. Many days had passed with no information about their situation.

4. Her delegation called for the international community to help Israel to combat terrorism. The only message that should be conveyed was the clear and unequivocal condemnation of the genocidal jihadist terrorist organization Hamas, a demand for the immediate release of all Israeli hostages held in Gaza and strong support for the right of Israel as a peace-seeking democracy to defend its citizens. Any other message played into the hands of Hamas and harmed the fight against terrorism. All acts of politicization or disinformation about the acts of Hamas hindered any resolution of the situation. While the magnitude, ruthless inhumanity, devastation and brutality of the situation and the testimonies of rape survivors, of children torn from their mothers' arms and of slaughtered families could not be comprehended, they should not be tolerated.

5. **Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom), speaking also on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Eswatini, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Marshall Islands, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Nauru, North Macedonia, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tuvalu, Ukraine and the United States of America, said that members of the Uighur and other predominantly Muslim minorities in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region continued to suffer serious violations of their human rights by the authorities of China. In its independent and authoritative assessment of human rights concerns in the Region, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had relied extensively on the records of China itself and had found evidence of large-scale arbitrary detention and systematic use of invasive surveillance on the basis of religion and ethnicity; severe and undue restrictions on legitimate cultural and religious practices, identity and expression, including reports of destruction of religious sites; torture, ill-treatment and sexual and gender-based violence, including forced abortion and sterilization; enforced disappearances and family separations; and forced

labour. The Office had concluded that the arbitrary and discriminatory detention of members of Uighur and other predominantly Muslim minorities on a large scale in the Region could constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.

6. In the more than one year since the assessment had been released, China had not engaged in any constructive discussion of those findings. In September 2023, at the fifty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had called on China to follow the recommendations resulting from the assessment and to take strong remedial action. Thus far, evidence of such action had not been seen. China should end its violations of human rights in Xinjiang, engage constructively with OHCHR and fully implement the recommendations resulting from the assessment.

7. **Mr. Al Rubkhi** (Oman), speaking also on behalf of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, said that the issue of human rights was garnering more attention in the light of increasing wars, epidemics, conflicts, xenophobia and anti-religious bigotry. The countries of the Council reaffirmed their commitment to promoting and protecting human rights in line with international instruments and with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which included the equal sovereignty of Member States. Discussions on human rights issues in United Nations forums should be constructive, objective and transparent. States should avoid interfering in the internal affairs of other States.

8. The States members of the Council reaffirmed that the rights to development and to eradicate poverty, ignorance and illness were the most important human rights. Furthermore, while all States had the right to preserve security and combat terrorism, that did not exempt them from upholding their obligations, in particular the observance of proportionality, non-discrimination and precaution, under international human rights instruments. States were urged to take proactive measures to foster dialogue on human rights issues, as consideration for other points of view helped to address the root causes of differences.

9. The States members of the Council made efforts in United Nations forums towards consensus on human rights issues. During discussions in the Committee, all States were urged to consider local conditions before speaking on a subject and to seek reliable sources of information in order to ensure respect for cultural and religious diversity, build trust and strengthen international cooperation on human rights matters.

10. **Ms. Rizk** (Egypt) said that her delegation condemned the bombing by Israel of Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza City, which had killed at least 500 people and might amount to a crime against humanity under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The bombing had taken place while delegations had been glorifying the promotion of human rights in the Committee, oblivious to the ongoing systematic violation of the human rights of Palestinian people under occupation. Israel must immediately stop its collective punishment of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. It must also immediately cease its shelling of areas near the Rafah border crossing to enable Egypt to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians under siege in Gaza. Egypt categorically rejected attempts to enforce the displacement of Palestinians to neighbouring countries, in contravention of the right to self-determination and the right of return. In addition, Egypt was concerned about limitations in some countries on the exercise of freedom of expression as well as inaction with respect to disinformation campaigns.

11. It was regrettable to witness the promotion of double standards and the use of human rights as a political tool for imposing values on countries, which ran counter to the principle of national sovereignty and the right of countries to choose their legal and ethical systems. Against the backdrop of serious economic and social challenges and global conflicts, the importance of multilateral cooperation and solidarity must be stressed. Egypt also emphasized that social, economic and cultural rights, in particular the right to development, were just as important as political and civil rights. The international financial and economic structure should be reformed so as to take into account the needs and priorities of developing countries. Egypt was deeply concerned about the rise in hate speech and xenophobia against Muslim communities and religious and ethnic minorities and warned that ongoing disinformation campaigns in traditional media and online undermined the right to freedom of expression.

12. **Mr. Aldaikan** (Kuwait) said that his delegation condemned the brutal shelling the previous day of a hospital in Gaza City by Israeli occupation forces as a clear violation of humanitarian law that had left hundreds of innocent people dead or injured. The international community must abandon its double standards when it came to the criminal practices of Israel and take a firm position that unarmed civilians must be protected. What had been happening to people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was not condoned by any religion, law or human instinct, regardless of the perpetrator.

13. In its commitment to human rights, Kuwait was inspired by its Islamic faith, in which the principles of equality and justice were enshrined. Its Constitution guaranteed the rights to freedom, justice and equality. His delegation stressed the importance of free and equal access to education and health care, without discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or gender. Kuwait also attached importance to freedom of belief and expression.

14. His Government had established institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, including a national office for human rights that was charged with strengthening respect for public freedoms in line with the Constitution, international instruments and Islamic sharia. In June 2023, the Kuwaiti Parliament had approved the creation of a committee on women and children with a view to protecting their rights and fundamental freedoms. Kuwait had also taken measures to ensure gender equality. Women held elected office and had taken up positions in important sectors such as diplomacy, law enforcement and the military. Concerted multilateral action was needed to address non-traditional and transnational challenges such as climate change, epidemics and threats to cybersecurity.

15. **Mr. Da Cruz** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that unilateral coercive measures, often employed as a means to enforce unilateral sanctions, had severe consequences. SADC was concerned by the complexity and ambiguity inherent in multiple, evolving and overlapping sanctions regimes and their extraterritorial nature, as observed in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights (A/78/196). Such sanctions curtailed the capacity of targeted countries, including Zimbabwe, to adequately respond to persistent global challenges, such as climate change and health threats.

16. SADC was concerned that, when sanctions affected the rights of an entire population, the impact was greater among vulnerable persons, thus defeating the endeavour to leave no one and no place behind. Member States had a collective responsibility to engage in constructive dialogue, cooperate with the Special Rapporteur and address those challenges in order to foster a more just and equitable international community. It was saddening that some countries that had imposed sanctions had refused to engage constructively with the Special Rapporteur.

17. SADC fully supported the Special Rapporteur's conclusions that sanctions had detrimental implications for the attainment of the Sustainable Development

Goals and the right to development in Zimbabwe and other States in the region. SADC had designated 25 October as Anti-Sanctions Day in solidarity with Zimbabwe and reiterated its call for the unconditional removal of sanctions.

18. **Mr. Alwasil** (Saudi Arabia) said that his country was intent on fulfilling all of its human rights obligations. It had submitted reports to the relevant treaty bodies and had launched more than 85 human rights-related programmes and activities. Moreover, his country had in recent years introduced significant institutional, legal and judicial reforms, a process that was ongoing.

19. Saudi Arabia welcomed the progress that had been made towards the elaboration of an international convention on the right to development and hoped that a consensus would be reached in that regard. To support that right, Saudi Arabia had created a development fund that had provided loans for projects in 84 developing countries. In addition, over the past 25 years, the Government had provided over \$96 billion for humanitarian aid and emergency relief to more than 164 countries.

20. Saudi Arabia supported the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions. It categorically rejected any calls for the forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza and condemned the bombardment by Israeli forces of the Baptist Hospital in Gaza, which had resulted in numerous casualties among civilians, including children. The international community must abandon its double standards and selective application of international humanitarian law when it came to Israel. The siege on Gaza must be lifted and the humanitarian corridors opened immediately.

21. The plight of the Muslim Rohingya minority in Myanmar was of huge concern. Saudi Arabia welcomed the efforts made by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to support the Rohingya, in particular the annual draft resolution that it submitted to the Committee.

22. **Ms. Eneström** (Sweden) said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had established a system to challenge traditional hierarchies of inequality, with individuals as rights holders and States as duty bearers, and to expand infrastructure for accountability at the national, regional and international levels. That system was being challenged by efforts to weaken accountability, dilute the obligations of States and restore traditional power structures; the harassment and illegal detention of journalists and human rights

defenders; the closing of civic space; and more armed conflict than at any time since 1945. The ruthless aggression of Russia against Ukraine, in blatant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, was one such example.

23. Her delegation urged Member States to remember that the choices they made, how they acted towards one another and how they safeguarded the international rules-based order that they had inherited would determine the future. The international human rights system was one of humankind's greatest achievements, but it needed to be maintained and to be defended when it was challenged. That system needed the reason and conscience of Member States more than ever.

24. **Mr. Hwang Joonkook** (Republic of Korea) said that greater light should be shed on people living in marginalized situations and under authoritarianism or totalitarianism. His delegation was particularly concerned at the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. There had been no significant improvement since the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had concluded, in its 2014 report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/25/63](#)), that such violations constituted crimes against humanity. Instead of addressing those issues, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had diverted its resources towards an unprecedented escalation of provocative ballistic missile launches and nuclear weapon development, in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions.

25. In her report ([A/78/526](#)), the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had expressed concern about the forced repatriation of North Korean escapees detained in a third country, who could be at risk of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment on their return, and called for observation of the principle of non-refoulement. Unfortunately, according to several sources, a number of North Korean people had been repatriated when the international borders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had been partially opened. More than a dozen human rights experts had called for respect of the principle of non-refoulement with regard to all individuals at all times, as an essential protection under international human rights, refugee and customary law.

26. The horrendous living conditions and human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had continually forced its people to flee across the border, mainly to China. It was horrifying and heartbreaking to see North Korean escapees, who had

risked everything on their long arduous road to freedom, being forcefully repatriated. His delegation was extremely concerned at the horrors, including the death penalty, that repatriated North Korean individuals were facing in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The international community must not tolerate such actions and must raise their voices to protect the human rights of people seeking the life that they deserved.

27. **Ms. Chan Valverde** (Costa Rica) said that, in order to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, human rights and sustainable development agendas should be comprehensively integrated at all levels, including in the production and monitoring of statistics. The Summit of the Future would help progress in that regard. It was necessary to fully guarantee the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and address its interdependence with all other rights with a view to finding people-centred and nature-based solutions to the triple environmental crisis.

28. Only solidarity, shared responsibility and respect for human rights would provide comprehensive solutions for migration. Costa Rica had the highest proportion of migrants compared with the total population in Latin America and received the third highest number of asylum applications in the world. However, as a middle-income country, it had limited resources, and its current and emerging challenges had been made invisible. Her delegation called for the international community to take immediate action to control migratory flows in a safe and orderly manner.

29. Costa Rica called for Member States to use the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to ensure that the universal human rights machinery, particularly OHCHR, had the necessary resources, including by supporting the treaty body system. Human rights could not be defended if financial commitments were not met. Costa Rica called for all actors to make tangible commitments to commemorate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

30. **Ms. Maiga** (Mali) said that Mali endeavoured to guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms to all people, as enshrined in its Constitution and in line with its international commitments. Mali was a party to almost all international legal human rights instruments and cooperated fully with all regional and international human rights mechanisms.

31. Her Government was working rigorously and systematically to minimize the impact of the multidimensional crisis that had affected Mali since 2012. The human rights situation in the country

remained heavily dependent on the security situation, and efforts to strengthen the capacities of defence and security forces had been intensified.

32. The principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity were incompatible with a hierarchical vision of human rights. Mali continued to be subjected to disproportionate and unjustified sanctions, which were imposed under the pretext of defending democracy and the rule of law but which trampled on the right of a people to decide its own destiny. Meanwhile, comparable situations in other States received favourable treatment.

33. To combat impunity, special sessions of assize and military courts had been held, including to address cases of economic and financial crime. As part of amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, slavery and terrorist recruitment were now considered criminal acts and violence against women and children had been made punishable by law. The competence of some criminal courts had also been expanded. National policy and an action plan had been adopted to provide reparations for victims of crises that had occurred in Mali since 1960, and rules regarding reparation for victims of serious human rights violations had been established.

34. **Ms. Cedano** (Dominican Republic) said that the promotion of human rights was not only a moral obligation, but also an imperative for peace and global prosperity. The Inter-Agency Commission on Human Rights in her country safeguarded human rights defenders and ensured a cross-cutting government human rights policy. Her Government also had policies on gender, climate change and territorial order and sought to protect civic space. The Ombudsman's Office ensured that public administration complied with ethical principles, the law and international treaties. To combat corruption and impunity, the independence and transparency of judicial powers had been strengthened. In 2018, a national human rights plan had been established in accordance with OHCHR guidelines, with a focus on civil and political rights, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, the rights of vulnerable groups and the implementation of international standards.

35. As a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2024–2026, the Dominican Republic would work tirelessly to address human rights violations at the global level, to foster peace, justice and equality, to strengthen the international human rights system, to promote dialogue and to bring about a world in which all people could enjoy their fundamental rights.

36. **Mr. Arbeiter** (Canada) said that traditional barriers to equity and equality remained or were growing. The work of the Committee was rightly focused on areas in which progress had been uneven or was slipping. In Afghanistan, the Taliban had systematically deprived women and girls of their rights to education, work, health and justice. The situation must not continue. Canada condemned the violent enforcement of the chastity and hijab law in Iran, the recent legislation to increase the severity of punitive measures against those seen as non-compliant and the ongoing brutal suppression of Iranian citizens, particularly women and girls. Canada would continue to stand up for the rights of women and all marginalized individuals and communities. Canada applauded the elimination of discriminatory laws against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, many of which had been colonial legacies. Queerness was not urban or elite; both an English-speaking man with a white-collar job and a woman with an agricultural job in a village could be queer.

37. There was often a gap between intention and the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly in conflict areas, and barriers to those rights were often imposed by Governments seeking to stifle their people. Canada called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and for all parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian law. Accountability was needed for the daily violations that continued to occur as part of the aggression by Russia against Ukraine. Canada supported the call of the people of the Sudan for a civilian-led democratic transition. The answer to such challenges was not to flee, to claim that they had been politicized or to resort to whataboutism. Despite its deep historic and structural issues, Canada could and should do more in ensuring the rights of all people, particularly Indigenous women and girls.

38. **Mr. Valtýsson** (Iceland) said that the growing number of deaths among civilians in the horrific hostilities unfolding in Israel and Gaza was devastating. Iceland was appalled by the recent strike on Ahli Hospital and condemned in the strongest terms the barbaric acts committed by Hamas. Terrorism could never be justified, and Israel had a clear right to defend itself within the bounds of international law. International humanitarian law must be respected and upheld at all times, breaches thereof must be carefully investigated, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access must be ensured, and civilians, medical personnel and humanitarian workers and assets must be protected.

39. Member States must work together to reverse trends of increasing hatred and intolerance and

pushback on gains made towards gender equality and sexual and reproductive rights, and to secure the universal human rights of all people. The international community must stand up for democracy, freedom and human rights, defend the freedom of expression and assembly and show tolerance for dissent as an integral part of public discourse.

40. As a candidate for election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2025–2027, Iceland would actively contribute to the Council's core mandates and would continue to engage with countries from all regions in an inclusive manner and in recognition of the importance of respectful and genuine dialogue. No Member State was perfect, but all could and should aim to do better. Member States should not shy away from dialogue or from denouncing human rights violations, regardless of where they were committed or by whom.

41. Human rights defenders facing derision, threats and attempts to silence their voices deserved the attention and support of the Committee. Iceland urged the Committee to reiterate its call for a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and strongly condemned reprisals against those cooperating with the United Nations.

42. **Ms. Sonkar** (India) said that her country was a party to all major human rights instruments, and its Constitution guaranteed fundamental civil and political rights. Safeguards for those rights had been reinforced through an independent and impartial judiciary, a progressive parliament, a free and vibrant media and a thriving civil society.

43. In India, the National Human Rights Commission was responsible for addressing human rights violations, raising awareness of human rights, conducting investigations, providing redress mechanisms and advocating for human rights issues. The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights ensured that laws and policies in India were aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The National Commission for Women promoted gender equality and women's rights and prevented and responded to crimes against women.

44. India had the world's largest health-care insurance programme, through which free treatment was provided to 100 million families, or 500 million people. Its affordable housing programme, also the largest in the world, had led to the building of over 23.5 million homes, and 94 million free cooking gas connections had been issued to protect women and children from indoor air pollution.

45. There were more than 1.4 million elected women representatives in India, and recently adopted legislation would ensure that a third of seats in national and State parliaments were reserved for women. Legal and institutional safeguards protected women from child marriage, domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace. Working women enjoyed 26 weeks of paid maternity leave. A robust legal framework was in place to protect children from sexual assault, pornography and trafficking, and education was free and compulsory for children aged between 6 and 14 years.

46. **Mr. Faiq** (Afghanistan) said that his country wished to express its solidarity with the Palestinian people who had been victims of, or had lost their loved ones in, a heinous attack on a hospital, and condemned any acts that led to the killing of civilians and innocent people. Over the past two weeks, earthquakes in the Herat Province of Afghanistan had claimed the lives of at least 2,400 people and caused extensive damage. Afghanistan called for assistance from the United Nations, international partners and donor countries in delivering critical aid to the thousands of people left without shelter, access to clean water or health-care facilities. The immediate and primary focus should be on providing relief to survivors and helping them to rebuild their lives.

47. The denial of fundamental human rights and freedoms under the rule of the Taliban continued to intensify. The regime had imposed systematic discrimination and gender-based restrictions, denying women and girls access to education, employment and public life, erasing hard-fought gains made over the past two decades and undermining women's ability to realize their full potential and contribute to economic development. Minority groups, including ethnic and religious groups, were increasingly marginalized and vulnerable. The Taliban's commitment to a general amnesty had been called into question owing to widespread extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, torture and ill-treatment. The suppression of dissent had intensified, and civic and media spaces continued to shrink. The application of corporal punishment had helped to maintain rule by fear, rather than the rule of law, and there were few checks on the arbitrary exercise of power. Access to justice was severely limited or unavailable, particularly for women and girls facing forced and child marriage and violence. The physical and mental health of the Afghan people faced severe consequences.

48. His delegation welcomed the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and his report ([A/78/338](#)), and stressed the importance of mechanisms for

monitoring and reporting on human rights violations by the Taliban and the need for accountability and an end to impunity. To achieve enduring peace and security, Afghanistan must be governed with genuine inclusivity and respect for human rights and the equality and dignity of all citizens, which could be achieved only through a collective and sustained effort by all stakeholders.

49. **Ms. Eat** (Cambodia) said that her delegation called for all Member States to reaffirm their commitment to fundamental human rights, to strive for a world where justice, equality and freedom were realities, to ensure that efforts to promote human rights were made with appreciation of varying backgrounds and circumstances, and to stand against politicization, double standards, selectivity and interference in the internal affairs of States under the pretext of protecting human rights and freedoms.

50. The human rights situation in Cambodia was a far cry from the abject poverty it had faced after decades of destructive wars, killing fields and deprivation of the right to development. Cambodia was now among the fastest growing economies in the world, with poverty falling by 1 per cent each year. It had more than enough food to feed the population and was endeavouring not only to expand access to education but also to improve its quality. Cambodia was among the countries which had made the most progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Gender equality and women's empowerment were fully mainstreamed, there were more mobile broadband Internet subscribers than members of the population, and local and foreign media outlets were easily and freely accessible. However, as in all civilized nations, freedom of expression must be exercised without infringing on the rights of others, public order and safety or national interest. It was unfair that countries such as Cambodia were criticized and chastised for applying the same rule.

51. The general election of July 2023 had allowed people to freely express their will through the ballots and had seen the country's highest voter turnout since 1993. Cambodia needed support and encouragement to build on the progress being made on human rights and freedoms. Her delegation opposed unilateral coercive measures as they contradicted the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, impeded the right to development and hindered the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

52. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that, since 2007, his Government had prioritized the restoration of rights that had historically been denied, held back or violated by neoliberalism. Tangible results from its

efforts to guarantee and strengthen health-care services had been internationally recognized. Permanent improvements had been made to the education process, and capacity-building had been provided for teaching staff and public officials to guarantee education for all. Following efforts to guarantee food security and sovereignty, agricultural workers were able to cultivate the land in peace and safety. Programmes aimed at low-income families had been established to construct and ensure access to social housing. Policies for equal work and equal salaries for women had been developed, and women participated actively in management and leadership positions. Policies, programmes, projects and legislation to promote and strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities had been introduced.

53. Despite the corrosive and illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed on Nicaragua by imperialist, colonialist and neocolonialist countries, his Government continued to promote the rights of its people to sustainable human development, peace, stability, progress and the exercise of fundamental freedoms. Nicaragua fully supported the one-China principle. Issues related to Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet, as inalienable parts of China, were internal affairs of that country. His delegation therefore opposed unfounded accusations made against China for political purposes.

54. **Ms. Tambwe** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that it was regrettable to witness the use of human rights as a pretext for undermining the principles of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal matters of States. Her delegation believed that issues concerning Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet were solely Chinese domestic affairs. China had demonstrated its commitment to improving the conditions of its people and had for many decades helped other countries to realize their social, political and economic rights, in particular their right to development. Her country therefore urged all Member States to uphold the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the work of the Committee and in other human rights forums. States should work towards the realization of human rights for all, without biases or double standards, while upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

55. **Mr. Moriko** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action pointed the way forward when it came to freedom, equality and the protection of human rights. Unfortunately, the celebration of the anniversaries of those documents came at a time when the world was plagued by structural inequalities, intensifying conflict-related violence and

acute humanitarian, migratory and food crises. During the interactive dialogues that had been held in the Committee, the Chairs of the treaty bodies, special procedure mandate holders and other experts had emphasized the efforts that must be made to promote and protect human rights.

56. Côte d'Ivoire was continuing its initiatives aimed at ensuring human rights. It had ratified all the main human rights instruments and was doing everything possible to meet its treaty obligations. His Government had in 2018 created the National Human Rights Council, an independent administrative authority that raised public awareness of human rights issues, provided human rights training for State and non-State actors and investigated allegations of violations. It also provided input into the preparation of reports for international human rights mechanisms. In 2014, the Government had adopted a law relating to the protection of human rights defenders.

57. The process of building peaceful and inclusive societies must take into account each society's pace of progress. Human rights issues must therefore be examined in manner that did not interfere in the internal affairs of States and within the framework of constructive dialogue.

58. **Mr. Milambo** (Zambia) said that his delegation was concerned by the loss of innocent lives in the Middle East and reiterated that disputes should be settled strictly through the diplomatic channel, and not through aggression. Numerous ongoing global crises and conflicts had led to repeated violations of human rights law. Thousands had lost their lives, and survivors were increasingly compelled to flee, which exposed them to a heightened risk of death or further violations.

59. The promotion and protection of human rights was key to good governance, the rule of law and peace and stability. The commitment of Zambia to the promotion of human rights was demonstrated through universal suffrage to ensure democratic governance and through ratification of human rights instruments. A national mechanism had been established to facilitate coordination among relevant ministries and agencies in the fulfilment of the State's reporting obligations under those instruments. His Government also continued to implement policies and programmes to improve the domestic human rights situation, and had invited special rapporteurs to visit the country.

60. Zambia had reviewed and amended laws in order to address issues that negatively affected the enjoyment of fundamental rights. In 2022, a law had been enacted to bring the legislative framework in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant

regional and international instruments. In 2021, to expand access to justice, his Government had enacted a law that granted legal aid in civil and criminal cases to indigent persons.

61. **Ms. Idres** (Sudan) said that, for six months, her country had been dealing with a rebellion by the Rapid Support Forces, a group that violated human rights and destroyed infrastructure. The Sudanese Armed Forces were carrying out their constitutional duty of preserving security, stability and sovereignty and protecting citizens, and did so in a competent manner that complied with international humanitarian and human rights law and with the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. Moreover, the Armed Forces had observed all ceasefires reached through the Jeddah platform, while the Rapid Support Forces had violated them.

62. Human rights were a priority for the Sudan. An entire section of the 2019 Constitutional Document was devoted to human rights, and her Government cooperated with international human rights mechanisms to fulfil its international law obligations. As part of its ongoing efforts to foster accountability and combat impunity, the President of the Transitional Sovereignty Council had decided to form a national committee to investigate crimes against humanity and human rights violations. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution [54/2](#) on responding to the human rights and humanitarian crisis caused by the ongoing armed conflict in the Sudan, had ignored urgent priorities, such as the need to meet humanitarian health needs, at a time when only 30 per cent of the United Nations humanitarian response plan had been implemented.

63. The Rapid Support Forces had attacked civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and airports and used them as military barracks. They had also attacked diplomatic missions and international organizations in Khartoum. They had forcibly recruited children, raped women and girls, and committed genocide and ethnic cleansing in West and South Darfur. They had caused the displacement of more than 5 million Sudanese people and had prevented the evacuation of civilians by establishing random and illegal checkpoints. The Sudan hoped that the international community would support the democratic transition process with a view to building just, comprehensive and sustainable peace in the country.

64. **Mr. Lamce** (Albania) said that his delegation strongly condemned the unprovoked and horrific attack on Israel, which had clearly been planned to cause indiscriminate destruction and civilian casualties. Those actions were not only illegal and immoral, but they

posed a severe threat to the security and well-being of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples alike.

65. The entire human rights agenda was encountering resistance worldwide. The unjustified and illegal Russian aggression against Ukraine continued, and deeply concerning reports had emerged of violations by Russian soldiers of the rights of older persons, women and children. In Afghanistan, the Taliban had issued over 50 decrees for the explicit purpose of erasing women from public life.

66. Human rights were important for peacebuilding and preventing conflict. Human rights information should play a greater role in common efforts to develop effective early warning mechanisms. Albania would work tirelessly to tackle all forms of discrimination, including on grounds of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, disability status, religion, age, sexual orientation or gender identity. His Government would promote women's equality and gender rights in line with the 2030 Agenda, as human rights advocacy was meaningless without the participation of women and girls.

67. Greater efforts were needed to protect human rights defenders and ensure that their voices were heard. Albania supported efforts to ensure accountability for acts of intimidation or reprisal, including against those who engaged with the United Nations. Concrete and decisive action must be taken to improve the situation of children worldwide, especially in countries affected by war. All States should reflect on how the human rights system could be improved. No country, no matter how large or powerful, could address current challenges alone.

68. **Ms. Williams** (Ghana) said that violations of human rights, including hate speech and the exploitation of women and young people, continued online and offline. Justice for such violations was often delayed as a result of heavy caseloads, insufficient financial and human resources and weak State responses. States must therefore prioritize measures aimed at strengthening national institutions while also enhancing regional and international cooperation.

69. Instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child remained indispensable to upholding human rights. Increased funding and logistical support were important for enhancing the effectiveness of the associated treaty bodies and mechanisms. Member States should receive technical, logistical and capacity-building support to enable them to strengthen their national human rights institutions.

70. State-of-the-art technologies should be embraced to prevent online exploitation, enhance cybersecurity and monitor, investigate and arrest perpetrators of human rights violations online. The ongoing negotiations on an international convention on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes provided an opportunity for States to address emerging challenges.

71. Efforts should be made to enhance regional and subregional mechanisms, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, as home-grown approaches that complemented global efforts. National human rights institutions in Ghana, such as the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice and the National Commission for Civic Education, had developed capacity-building programmes aimed at reinforcing justice processes.

72. **Ms. Wafiuddin** (Brunei Darussalam) said that the most recent data from the World Health Organization suggested that depression and anxiety disorders affected more than 250 million people worldwide. Moreover, the disruption caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had resulted in increased rates of stress and suicide in some regions. It was imperative to continue to promote mental health awareness and action in order to fulfil the right of all to the highest attainable standard of mental health.

73. Brunei Darussalam recognized mental health as an integral part of health and well-being and a significant determinant of quality of life. Her Government had therefore adopted a mental health action plan for the period 2022–2025, with the aim of strengthening mental health systems, policies and programmes in a coordinated and cohesive manner, with input from stakeholders from the health and non-health sectors, while also making efforts to end stigma, fear and discrimination related to mental health. The plan was also aimed at protecting the rights of mentally ill persons.

74. Brunei Darussalam had marked World Mental Health Day by organizing national activities, including a series of mental health symposiums to raise public awareness and drive action on promoting and protecting mental health as a universal human right. Her country had also launched a national 24-hour hotline staffed by mental health advisers. Brunei Darussalam planned to promote regional and international collaboration on mental health, in particular through mechanisms led by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

75. **Mr. Ono** (Japan) said that his delegation condemned the recent terror attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian militants and demanded the release of the

hostages. His delegation also wished to express strong indignation about the attack the previous day on Ahli Hospital in Gaza City, which had resulted in numerous casualties. It was crucial to minimize the deterioration of humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip and to ensure humanitarian access to the area. The previous day, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan had announced that Japan would provide \$10 million in emergency humanitarian aid for the Gaza Strip.

76. It was regrettable that Russian aggression against Ukraine continued. Attempts to unilaterally change the status quo through the use of force were unacceptable. Japan urged the Russian Federation to end its violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of human rights.

77. United Nations reports indicated that the humanitarian situation in Myanmar had further deteriorated. The Myanmar military should take immediate measures to stop the violence, release detainees and restore the democratic political system. Japan was particularly concerned about the incident in Kachin State on 9 October 2023, as a result of which dozens of civilians, including internally displaced persons, had been killed and injured.

78. The Taliban should immediately withdraw all measures that restricted the enjoyment by Afghan women and girls of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. His Government was providing \$3 million in emergency aid to repair the damage caused by the earthquake in western Afghanistan on 7 October 2023 and wished to express its condolences to the families of the victims. Japan stressed the importance of guaranteeing freedom and the rule of law in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, Tibet and Hong Kong. Lastly, Japan strongly urged North Korea to immediately return all Japanese abductees.

79. **Mr. Baka** (Togo) said that all human rights were universal, indivisible and interdependent. His Government had therefore worked tirelessly over the years to adopt policies and measures to implement the provisions of the numerous international human rights instruments to which it was a party. Such measures included the establishment of institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Human Rights, both in line with the 1992 Constitution of Togo.

80. His Government's actions had always been aimed at both promoting democracy and the rule of law and strengthening governance and socioeconomic development. Efforts to improve social protections and increase resilience in the face of crises and shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic included the creation of a

monetary transfer system to benefit informal sector workers; the roll-out of a work-study programme to promote and guarantee employment; and the adoption of legislation establishing universal health insurance. Such initiatives reflected his Government's firm commitment to combating poverty and social inequality and to promoting and protecting the socioeconomic rights of all citizens of Togo.

81. **Ms. Jabou Bessadok** (Tunisia) said that the Committee must condemn in the harshest terms the heinous crimes committed by the Israeli occupying forces against Palestinians in the Occupied Territory and their blatant violations of the right to life and of international humanitarian and human rights law. The attack the previous day by the occupying forces on Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza had resulted in hundreds of casualties, among them women, children and medical personnel.

82. She asked how the Committee could talk about human rights in the light of the continued killing, closing of humanitarian corridors and deprivation of the most basic necessities, which were carried out with total impunity. She wondered how many children in Palestine must die before the world broke its silence and put an end to the massacres. Human rights were indivisible and must not be subject to double standards. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Palestinian children had the rights to life, freedom, health care, education, recreation, psychological security and peace. The situation in Palestine was a test of the international community's commitment to international law. In the Committee, delegations regularly condemned human rights violations in many States. Her delegation had been looking forward to hearing that same passion when it came to the current situation.

83. Tunisia remained committed to the Charter of the United Nations and to multilateral action carried out by Member States on the basis of objectivity, non-politicization and open and constructive dialogue. Her delegation hoped that the international community would intervene in the name of human rights to end the shelling, collective punishment and blocking of humanitarian assistance.

84. **Mr. Gulov** (Tajikistan) said that his country strongly condemned the bombing of Ahli Baptist Hospital, which had caused many deaths and injuries, including among children and women. Civilian facilities, especially hospitals, should be safe places and should not be attacked under any circumstances. His delegation wished to express its condolences to affected families, strongly condemned the acts of violence and

called for an immediate ceasefire by all parties and the start of dialogue to stabilize the situation.

85. Since its independence, Tajikistan had acceded to several international human rights instruments. The Constitution of Tajikistan guaranteed the enjoyment of rights and freedom for all, and the country's laws provided a legal basis for safeguarding equal rights and opportunities and established a legal system for the prevention of and protection against discrimination. Measures were being taken to implement human rights norms, with special attention paid to strengthening international cooperation within the United Nations and other international and regional organizations. Such cooperation included the submission of numerous reports, both under the universal periodic review and to United Nations treaty bodies.

86. In addition, his Government had hosted and received recommendations from 11 special procedure mandate holders and adopted 20 national action plans to implement treaty body recommendations. A newly adopted national human rights protection strategy, based on international human rights standards and covering the period up to 2038, incorporated not only all existing national plans, but also other human rights-related documents, and provided improved mechanisms and procedures for implementing international human rights obligations.

87. **Ms. Salem** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that, for 11 days, the world had watched Israel – a State Member of the Organization – brutally assault her people in the Gaza Strip, killing more than 3,000 Palestinians, including 1,000 children, and injuring many more, half of them women and children. No Palestinian family there had been spared from death, injury or displacement, and those seeking safe haven in hospitals had been massacred. She wondered whether that made Israel feel more secure and met its need for unconditional support.

88. According to the United Nations, families in Gaza were being bombed by Israel, both in their homes and along damaged roads, following an Israeli evacuation order that had left hundreds of thousands scrambling for safety with nowhere safe to go. Israel had resorted to unlawful collective punishment as a method of war, intentionally cutting fuel, water and electricity while blocking the entry of humanitarian aid, and razing entire neighbourhoods to the ground by hitting homes, schools, United Nations facilities and health centres with direct, intense and continuous air strikes. Aid workers had been targeted and killed, and rescue teams were struggling to carry out their missions. There were severe equipment shortages, with limited to no

connection to mobile networks. Food supplies were running dangerously low. Hospitals were overwhelmed and running out of medicine. Morgues were overflowing, and bodies were being buried in mass graves. An order by Israel to evacuate 22 hospitals, including newborns in incubators, had been labelled a death sentence by the World Health Organization.

89. With 2 million Palestinian people living in Gaza, half of whom were children, the scale of the destruction and mass killings was indicative, not of so-called collateral damage, but of indiscriminate, barbaric and brutal attacks against civilians. Proclaiming that Israel was not responsible for those crimes was inhumane and irresponsible and undermined the most fundamental rules of international law-based order. Her delegation called on those present to take a stand to stop the massacres and the epic human suffering and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. Only justice deserved unconditional support, not vengeance.

90. **Mr. Pary Rodríguez** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that his delegation wished to express its solidarity with the observer for the State of Palestine and condemned the atrocious genocide currently being committed against Palestinians in Gaza. It was inconceivable that children, women and older persons should suffer great injustice and terrible human rights violations while waiting desperately for urgent action by the international community.

91. As a founding Member of the Organization, his country reaffirmed the premises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The continual development of international human rights law provided a means for calling upon the international community to jointly tackle shared challenges, especially with regard to access to justice. As a member and a Vice-President of the Human Rights Council, the Plurinational State of Bolivia underscored the Council's work to promote economic, social and cultural rights and combat inequalities, including through the recent creation of a working group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas.

92. One third of his country's population was under 18 years of age. His delegation therefore welcomed general comment No. 26 (2023) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change. It also welcomed general recommendation No. 39 (2022) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the rights of Indigenous women and girls and its translation into Indigenous languages. His country was concerned about the continued normalization of

high levels of violence against Indigenous women throughout the region.

93. It was vital to recognize women's contributions to social development and well-being, in particular through access to high-quality education as a tool for social transformation and by tearing down barriers to comprehensive education on sexual and reproductive health rights. The work done and advances made to benefit people of African descent, in particular by the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, were also important.

94. **Ms. Raivoso** (Mozambique) said that her delegation fully supported the conclusions and recommendations outlined in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development (A/78/160) on minimizing the adverse impacts of current global challenges and business activities on human rights. Against the backdrop of multiple and unprecedented global crises, realizing the right to development was crucial to ensuring the realization of all other human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals in order to leave no one behind. Despite global strides in promoting social inclusion, gender inequality remained a major hurdle, with the right to development threatened by the persistent social exclusion of and discrimination against women and girls. It was imperative to address the underlying factors preventing them from enjoying their human rights.

95. The inalienable human right to development encompassed a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process aimed at the continuous improvement of social and individual well-being. Because her Government promoted and valued the involvement of women in that process and encouraged their active role in all social spheres, it had developed a legislative, strategic and structural framework for addressing gender-related matters, violence against women and early marriage.

96. Although public and private entities were also entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy the right to economic, social, cultural and political development, it was necessary to review negative business practices that fostered social inequalities and discrimination, adopt initiatives that facilitated access to safe and affordable technologies for all and allocate resources for the full implementation of the right to development. Mozambique maintained its unwavering commitment to the continued promotion and protection of human rights, considering relevant national and international laws.

97. **Mr. Aydı** (Türkiye) said that, building on its previous human rights action plan, his Government had

begun to prepare a new plan for the period 2024–2028. Türkiye maintained constructive cooperation with relevant United Nations mechanisms, as evidenced by the recent submission of its second periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Deeply concerned about the rise of xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia in the world, Türkiye would continue to participate in international efforts to combat intolerance and discrimination by promoting mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. Governments should not aggravate fears that stoked hatred towards “the other”.

98. Türkiye was also deeply concerned about the ongoing violence in Israel and Palestine. His delegation strongly condemned the loss of civilian lives and called on all parties to de-escalate, exercise restraint and avoid actions that could worsen the situation. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza were unacceptable; international humanitarian and human rights law must be respected under all circumstances. An immediate ceasefire was urgently needed, and the international community must facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.

99. Committed to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and the protection of its civilian population, Türkiye would continue to support the rights of Crimean Tatar Turks, as the Indigenous People of Crimea, to preserve their identity and live peacefully in their historical homeland. The rights and freedoms of Uighur Turks and other Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region must also be protected, within the territorial integrity and sovereignty of China. Human rights violations in Myanmar, including crimes against the Rohingya, remained another source of concern. Democracy must be restored there without delay, the conditions of the Rohingya must be improved and efforts towards a viable solution to the crisis must continue.

100. The increasing erosion of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Afghanistan, including through severe restrictions on women and girls, was also worrisome. Recent earthquakes in Herat had re-exposed the precariousness of the situation in the country, which required global efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of the Afghan people. Meanwhile, the 12-year-old conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to deprive millions of Syrians of their fundamental human rights. His delegation called upon the Syrian regime to genuinely engage in the political process, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), and the international community not to turn a blind eye to the human rights violations of terrorist organizations operating in the country.

101. **Ms. Leendertse** (Germany) said that war and aggression continued to threaten fundamental human rights and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Her delegation condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the indiscriminate attacks by Hamas across Israel and reiterated Israel's right to self-defence, in line with the Charter. The blast that had killed hundreds at Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza the previous day was horrific. Civilians must not be attacked by anyone under any circumstances; they must be fully protected, and safe and unimpeded humanitarian access must be ensured. Her delegation also condemned the continued war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and related war crimes and crimes against humanity, including against thousands of children.

102. Respect for civil and political rights, such as freedoms of expression, assembly and association, was crucial to creating strong and resilient societies. It was vital to protect human rights defenders from repression and acts of reprisal, which could not be considered internal matters of sovereignty, as they affected international obligations and their effects transcended borders. Germany remained dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, in particular with regard to development cooperation and the human rights to water and sanitation. Germany was also committed to advancing gender equality on the national and global levels, to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, in all their diversity. Given the inherent dignity and equality of all individuals, racism was a blatant contradiction of human rights that undermined the stability of societies. It must therefore be eradicated.

103. Acknowledging historical and moral responsibility for past injustices included the restitution of cultural artefacts to countries of origin as an integral part of respecting the rights and aspirations of affected communities. International collaboration, constructive dialogue and ethical practices were necessary to ensuring the fair and just management of cultural heritage, so as to preserve the diversity and richness of the world's cultural legacy. In the lead-up to the Summit of the Future, Member States must ensure that the realization of the human rights of all would be taken into account in the eventual outcome document. Young people must also play a visible and meaningful role in the Summit and beyond.

104. **Mr. Montalvo Sosa** (Ecuador) said that his delegation was horrified by reports of the destruction of the Arab Hospital in Gaza, with hundreds killed. Hospitals must be sanctuaries to preserve human life; respecting international humanitarian law was an imperative of the international community.

105. After presenting its fourth report under the universal periodic review at the end of 2022, Ecuador had created a national mechanism for preparing follow-up reports, established the Ministry for Women and Human Rights and shared good practices on respecting the human rights of people on the move. His delegation's three terms on the Human Rights Council and the January 2023 visit by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had further highlighted his country's commitment to strengthening multilateralism and to promoting and protecting human rights. The international community had a collective responsibility to do its utmost to ensure the realization of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, including by implementing the recommendations of the treaty bodies, Special Rapporteurs and human rights mechanisms to ensure that no one was left behind. In line with the recommendations of the High Commissioner, and together with his Office, Ecuador had implemented local projects to protect human rights and adopted measures to promote greater civil society participation, tackle inequalities and address the root causes of discrimination.

106. As a country of destination, origin, transit, return and refuge with the greatest number of persons recognized officially as refugees in Latin America and the Caribbean, Ecuador was aware of its responsibility to uphold the rights and responsibilities of people on the move while combating networks involved in trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. Migrants in Ecuador were treated the same as Ecuadorians, evidence that the principles of solidarity and protection of human rights could be incorporated successfully in public policy through cooperation and international support. Ecuador remained unequivocally committed to overcoming the challenges to respecting, promoting and protecting the human rights of all.

107. **Mr. Aron** (Indonesia) said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remained a testament to the collective aspiration for dignity, freedom and equality in a world facing increasingly complex and pressing challenges to human rights. It was imperative to translate its words into action at the national, regional and global levels, so as to create a world where human rights were not only upheld but celebrated.

108. Indonesia stood in firm solidarity with the Palestinian people in Gaza. His delegation condemned the policy of collective punishment by the occupying Power. The recent attacks targeting civilian facilities, including hospitals, as a result of which 500 people had been killed and countless others injured, were horrifying and defied the very essence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indonesia called for an urgent and

immediate ceasefire and for humanitarian aid to reach those in need. The suffering of innocent children and women must cease.

109. At the regional level, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations had adopted a declaration with a view to promoting dialogue and enhancing cooperation on human rights issues. At the national level, Indonesia had concluded its fourth cycle of the universal periodic review, had ratified eight core human rights instruments and was currently in the process of ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Recent efforts to address historical injustices, foster reconciliation and prevent future human rights violations included an acknowledgement by the President of past violations and the issuance of a new Presidential decree establishing a committee to oversee non-judicial settlements and fortify judicial processes.

110. **Mr. Tammsaar** (Estonia) said that the deteriorating human rights situation in many parts of the world, including Afghanistan, Iran, Myanmar, the Sudan and Syria, was of deep concern, as were developments in the Middle East. Estonia strongly condemned the brutal attacks by the terrorist organization Hamas against Israel, which had resulted in destruction and the loss of civilian lives. All hostages must be immediately released and the crisis resolved in line with international humanitarian law, with protection for civilians an imperative.

111. Since the full-scale war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine had begun nearly two years earlier, Ukrainians had been subjected to severe violations of international law and severe breaches of the Charter of the United Nations. In September 2022, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine had confirmed evidence of war crimes committed by Russian armed forces involving the systematic and widespread use of attacks against civilians, torture, sexual and gender-based violence and grave violations against children. In March 2023, the International Criminal Court had issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova for the unlawful deportation of thousands of children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation. In his report on children and armed conflict ([A/77/895-S/2023/363](#)), the Secretary-General had listed the Russian Federation as a party committing grave violations against children. With schools and hospitals destroyed, Ukrainian children had been deprived of education and health services. Many had lost their parents and been left with psychological scars. The Russian political and military leadership must be held fully accountable for the crime of aggression, and

Russian armed forces and affiliated mercenaries must withdraw from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine and abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

112. Freedom of expression had also decreased in many countries, while impunity remained high and Internet shutdowns were becoming more frequent. Given advancements in digital technologies, emerging threats to human rights must be acknowledged and adequate safeguards developed to protect human rights. With media and Internet freedoms increasingly intertwined, international human rights law must be respected, both online and offline. Estonia was a founding member of the Media Freedom Coalition and the Freedom Online Coalition. It was also a founding member of the Equal Rights Coalition, aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other (LGBTQI+) persons, and had legalized same-sex marriages in June 2023. As a liberal democracy, Estonia condemned discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity and aimed to protect and advance the human rights of all people, as that led to more cohesive and prosperous societies.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.