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Chair: Mr. Maniratanga (Burundi)
later: Ms. Sorto Rosales (Vice-Chair) (El Salvador)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 26: Social development (*continued*)

- (a) **Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly** (*continued*) ([A/79/154](#))
- (b) **Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family** (*continued*) ([A/79/61](#) and [A/79/157](#))
- (c) **Literacy for life: shaping future agendas** (*continued*) ([A/79/155](#))

1. **Ms. Nae** (Romania), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the youth delegates of Romania were lucky to have received an education and thus have the chance to pursue their goals. However, many young people around the world were not so lucky. Education was vital to reduce inequalities and advance human rights. Youth delegates must advocate policies that guaranteed young people, regardless of their circumstances, access to quality education, healthcare and equal opportunities.

2. Pregnant young women had uneven access to proper care and support systems, leading to poverty, social isolation, stigma and lost opportunities. Adolescent pregnancy was linked to a loss of literacy and access to education, since many adolescent mothers dropped out of school. Young mothers must be given the opportunity to return to school or to pursue alternative educational pathways that included training in financial literacy and reproductive health.

3. **Mr. Stark** (Romania), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people from vulnerable communities were unable to meet educational and job market requirements due to a lack of digital skills, which had become a necessity in the rapidly changing world. Civil society and government institutions in Romania had collaborated to increase digital literacy levels among Romanian youth from vulnerable regions, preparing them to be more resilient and better equipped to adapt to change.

4. Digital technologies must be harnessed to ensure the access of young persons to educational resources and effective and inclusive social services. However, the international community must be prepared to counter the risks that accompanied the widespread implementation of digital solutions, including digital exclusion, discrimination and violations of the right to privacy.

5. **Mr. Nyamdorj** (Mongolia) said that, despite decades-long efforts, inequality had slowly been increasing throughout the world and had recently been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, other crises and conflicts. Recurrent global financial crises could have lasting impacts on financing for development in developing countries. The Committee's current deliberations would contribute to accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and updating the global consensus on social development for the current epoch.

6. In the past two years, his country's economy had experienced growth, driven mainly by the removal of COVID-19-related restrictions and a rebound in the agriculture sector. His Government had taken steps to strengthen socioeconomic development, including through its Vision 2050 long-term development policy, a programme of action for the period 2024–2028 and the establishment of a ministry of economy and development. Digital information initiatives were being implemented to increase citizens' access to government services and reduce costs.

7. In Mongolia, young people aged between 15 and 34 years, who constituted about 35 per cent of the population, were recognized as pivotal in shaping the country's

future and influencing socioeconomic development and political processes. His Government had enacted a law on the promotion of youth development that was aligned with its Vision 2050 and had established a high-level governance structure to oversee the progress of youth development initiatives in the country. Initiatives regarding older persons and persons with disabilities had also been implemented.

8. **Ms. Al Shibli** (Oman) said that her Government had developed a comprehensive social protection system that included universal healthcare and social support for the most vulnerable groups, including women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. In line with her Government's vision up to 2040, the social protection system was designed to protect individuals and families from social and economic risks through the provision of various benefits, including for children, older persons, widows, orphans, persons with disabilities and families. The social insurance scheme covered old age, disability, death, occupational injuries and diseases, maternity leave and sick leave.

9. Her Government had expanded its social protection programmes to cover workers in the private sector, with the aim of establishing an effective partnership between the public and the private sectors. Her Government was employing innovations and technology to improve the social protection system and facilitate access to social services, thereby enhancing their efficiency and reducing bureaucracy. With a view to making its social protection system fairer and more comprehensive, her Government sought to exchange knowledge and experiences with other countries and to establish mutually beneficial partnerships with international organizations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that the large number of activities that had been organized around the world to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family reaffirmed the importance of the family as a natural and fundamental unit of society that should be protected by society and the State, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

11. The ministry in Cameroon dedicated to the promotion of the family sought to foster family harmony by encouraging responsible parenthood and reinforcing the role and status of fathers and mothers. A national strategy for educating children within the family had been adopted in 2020. Her Government continued to support the legalization of common-law unions through the organization of collective marriage ceremonies.

12. The international community could not commit to promoting human rights while simultaneously undermining the traditional family. Efforts to diminish the importance of the family, including by undermining the authority of parents and legal guardians, and by calling into question the family as an institution, were cause for concern. The so-called diversity of families was invoked to counterbalance the institution of the family. To Cameroon, the family consisted of a man, a woman and their children; no other structure was a family.

13. The family should be strengthened through comprehensive support and the enactment of laws and policies that encouraged the maintenance and reconstitution of the family unit. No human institution deserved more attention and protection than the traditional family. Having a happy and prosperous society required that every child grow up with a loving mother and a caring father.

14. **Ms. Novotná** (Czechia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that leaving no one behind must remain a core principle of policymaking. In 2023, one in five young people globally was not in education, employment or training, and 75 per cent of those young people were women. As the labour market had recovered from the COVID-19 crisis, young men had benefited more than young women. The international community must

create more job opportunities for young women and support their equal participation in the labour market and their access to education.

15. According to the International Labour Organization, young workers were more likely than adults to end up in informal employment. Young people struggled to find jobs that matched their qualifications, which created frustration and limited their economic opportunities and social mobility. Bridging the gap between leaving school and securing a decent job required an inclusive and continuous school-to-work programme. Paid internships helped young people to become financially independent. However, unpaid internships created a gap between those who could afford to work for free and those who could not, limiting access to valuable experience and affecting job opportunities. Responsible policymaking vis-à-vis youth employment and education was crucial to making changes that would benefit everyone. The best investment that the international community could make was in the future of the global economy and society.

16. **Ms. Cancellaro** (Czechia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that there were obstacles to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4, on inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Recent floods in Central Europe had had a great impact on the region's educational institutions. Such disasters highlighted the interconnectedness of Goal 4 with Goal 13, on climate action. In 2022, many children had been affected by flooding, with schools destroyed and education interrupted for a long time. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), climate-related disasters disrupted the education of nearly 40 million children each year globally, threatening the achievement of Goal 4. The international community must invest in resilient educational systems and infrastructure that could withstand environmental shocks and provide continuous learning during crises.

17. While new technologies could improve learning, they posed ethical challenges. Artificial intelligence in the classroom raised concerns about the protection of human rights in the digital age. Artificial intelligence-driven systems, especially those used for monitoring and assessments, must prioritize privacy and fairness, in particular regarding children's digital data privacy and freedom of expression. Young people must participate more in shaping policies that affected education, the environment and human rights to ensure that technological advances and environmental resilience were developed responsibly and in line with their needs.

18. **Mr. Nidup** (Bhutan) said that his Government, guided by its philosophy of gross national happiness, placed the well-being and happiness of the people of Bhutan at the heart of its development agenda and sought to ensure that progress in that regard benefited every member of society. In its most recent five-year plan, his Government had set the goals of expanding healthcare access, enhancing educational outcomes, promoting gender equality and ensuring social protection for the most vulnerable. The plan was focused on early childhood education, mental health, and maternal and child healthcare, with investments aimed at enhancing services and strengthening rural infrastructure.

19. Bhutan was working to equip its young people with the skills needed to thrive in an evolving global economy. New youth-related government initiatives included a programme that empowered young people to contribute meaningfully to the economy while gaining the skills required for the country's development. The programme provided training in agriculture, construction, information technology and entrepreneurship. Through a national one-year civic service programme, youth were trained in leadership, as well as in food, home, community and information and communications technology (ICT) security.

20. Having recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Bhutan was working to ensure that persons with disabilities had access to healthcare,

education and employment to protect their dignity and leave no one behind. The international community must strengthen its collective efforts to combat poverty and foster social inclusion.

21. **Ms. Mazaeva** (Russian Federation) said that, notwithstanding the attempts of certain delegations to politicize the current discussion, her delegation would maintain its long-standing position that each topic should be discussed in the appropriate forum. Bilateral issues should be discussed primarily through bilateral discussions. Ukraine had chosen to reject such discussions, preferring instead to undermine the work of bodies that followed a unifying agenda. When discussing the problems of future generations, Ukraine should remember the fates of the children of Donbas, Belgorod and Kursk.

22. The Commission for Social Development should remain the key body for the discussion of social issues. The intergovernmental development of joint decisions within the Commission gave it an undeniable advantage over other forums in which social development issues could be discussed. It was Governments that were responsible for improving living conditions for the people within their jurisdiction. No attempt to take the initiative to determine the way forward for the social agenda, including by United Nations special agencies, would meet the approval of the Russian Federation.

23. In the Russian Federation, measures taken under her Government's Accessible Environment programme ensured the access of persons with disabilities to education and social services and enabled them to participate in cultural activities and sports. Protecting family values and the traditional family was a top priority of her Government's social policy. The year 2024 had been declared the Year of the Family in the Russian Federation. Her Government was developing a national project aimed at fostering a sustainable increase in the birth rate and increasing the number of families with many children. Her Government based its youth policies on the key provisions of the World Programme of Action for Youth. A youth movement had been active for the past two years in the Russian Federation, enabling young people to realize their creative potential and participate actively in social and cultural life.

24. In its resolution [78/324](#), the General Assembly had decided to conclude the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing. Member States had agreed by consensus to consider the recommendations included in decision 14/1 of the Open-ended Working Group in an equitable and non-exclusive manner in any future discussions on the topic. In discussions on ageing issues, it was vital to consider the need not only to uphold human rights but also to achieve relevant social objectives. The Commission for Social Development could serve as the relevant platform for such discussions. The General Assembly had never met to discuss the options listed in decision 14/1, let alone any further steps in that regard.

25. **Ms. Ochoa Espinales** (Nicaragua) said that, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community must implement policies that promoted the right to development. Efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be increased on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities, with priority given to poverty eradication and multilateralism.

26. Her Government was implementing a development model focused on reducing poverty and inequalities and enhancing economic growth in the country by creating jobs, promoting and facilitating investments, improving the quality of life and protecting natural resources. Through its national plan to combat poverty and foster human development for the period 2022–2026, her Government had charted a road map for economic growth and the protection of the rights of families.

27. In the national budget for 2024, billions of dollars had been allocated to social programmes, most of which were aimed at ensuring public health, education and infrastructure, including electricity and drinking water. In 2024, 37.5 per cent of her country's social spending had been allocated to education and health, and 61 per cent of the budget had been devoted to combating poverty.

28. In Nicaragua, 99.5 per cent of the population had access to electricity, much of which was generated from renewable sources. According to the World Economic Forum, in 2024, Nicaragua ranked first in gender parity in Latin America and sixth globally. Through its national plan for production, consumption and trade, her country had achieved food sovereignty, with 95 per cent of the food consumed by Nicaraguans produced locally.

29. The imposition of illegal unilateral coercive measures must be ended. Such measures were damaging to her people, undermined peace and hindered programmes to achieve the Goals.

30. **Mr. Al Saoudi** (Iraq) said that, given the major challenges that were facing humanity, strengthened cooperation was needed between countries of the global North and the global South and between States and the United Nations, with the involvement of civil society, to achieve comprehensive social development.

31. His Government was implementing ambitious national plans to achieve sustainable development and strategies to promote equality and non-discrimination. In 2023, an Act had been adopted to expand social security coverage for workers in various sectors and ensure a decent life for them and their families. Preserving the family as the fundamental group unit of society in accordance with article 23 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was a priority of his Government. Cohesive and strong families led to social cohesion and the achievement of comprehensive social development. His Government was working to provide care for and protect the rights of persons with disabilities and older persons. His Government sought to create a supportive environment for young people by building their capacities, holding workshops to enhance their role in development efforts and providing higher education opportunities and training programmes organized together with the United Nations.

32. Iraq was committed to working with the international community to find common solutions to the problems facing the world. Cooperation with United Nations human rights bodies was vital for achieving the goals of the Committee and for building a better and sustainable future for all segments of society.

33. **Ms. González Cabello Maldonado** (Paraguay) said that her Government was committed to improving the quality of life of people living in poverty by coordinating effectively with the private sector and civil society. Her country's national poverty reduction plan had been updated to address monetary and multidimensional poverty. Her Government had increased cash transfer amounts to reduce disparities in the living conditions of the population. As part of her Government's efforts to promote digital transformation and modernize social assistance systems, funds were transferred to beneficiaries of social programmes through a mobile wallet, significantly reducing associated costs.

34. Her Government had implemented a programme to eradicate hunger in schools, achieving 100 per cent coverage for school lunch up to the ninth grade and thereby improving food security, children's nutrition indicators and school attendance. Paraguay had strengthened its food pension programme, under which monthly income was provided to individuals over 65 years of age living in poverty, thereby making progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 10. The above-mentioned efforts had been made possible by technical assistance from the United Nations system and support from other countries.

35. **Ms. Oppong-Ntiri** (Ghana) said that some 2.7 billion people remained offline, most of whom resided in developing countries, with women, young people and persons with disabilities facing the greatest challenges. High Internet access costs in low-income countries further widened the gap, making universal digital inclusion an urgent priority. Through global solidarity and investments, the international community must help countries to make digital technologies accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographical location. Efforts to expand affordable Internet access and digital infrastructure must be accelerated, with particular attention paid to reaching rural and marginalized communities so that no one was left behind.

36. Regional partnerships were vital to promote digital inclusivity and infrastructure development. Her delegation welcomed the African Digital Transformation Strategy of the African Union and initiatives of the Economic Community of West African States that fostered collaboration and innovation across the continent. Integrating digital skills training into national educational systems would ensure that young people were equipped with the skills needed to take advantage of emerging opportunities. Social services should be digitized to make them more accessible, efficient and responsive to the needs of vulnerable populations. The international community must establish strong governance and accountability frameworks to safeguard human rights, prevent discrimination and protect privacy in the use of digital technologies. Transparency and fairness should guide the use of artificial intelligence and other frontier technologies, ensuring that they promoted social justice.

37. Through the Digital Ghana Agenda, her Government was enhancing access to digital infrastructure, services and skills. The expansion of mobile services in Ghana had enabled financial access and inclusion for previously unbanked individuals. Her Government was investing in digital literacy programmes and entrepreneurship initiatives to provide young people with those skills. In the face of job displacement due to automation and artificial intelligence, her Government was committed to reskilling and upskilling the workforce.

38. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan) said that, with the world's population of people aged 60 years and older projected to increase from 1.2 billion in 2024 to 2.1 billion by 2050, it was essential to strengthen social protection systems, promote decent jobs for all, define appropriate working ages, improve access to healthcare, promote lifelong learning, and improve pension and welfare systems. In the year of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the international community should reaffirm its commitment to supporting families as agents of sustainable development.

39. The number of young people was increasing in developing countries. The Declaration on Future Generations responded to the changing nature of work, to legal and illegal migration and to the impact of technology. The report of the Secretary-General on information and digital technologies for advancing social development ([A/79/154](#)) highlighted opportunities to improve social protection, healthcare and education. It was critical to bridge the digital divide to ensure the universal benefits of digital transformation.

40. Realizing the objectives in the Pact for the Future would require political will and adequate financing. The Pact comprised actions to bridge the financing gap for the Goals, including rechannelling unused special drawing rights from the 2021 allocation, addressing future shocks through the issuance of special drawing rights, considering capital increases in multilateral development banks, supporting negotiations on a United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation and delivering a robust replenishment of the International Development Association. In his next

report on advancing inclusive social development, the Secretary-General must focus on the fulfilment of the commitments made in the Pact.

41. **Ms. Luque Nuñez** (Panama) said that social development was a necessary condition for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Education, healthcare, gender equality and social inclusion must guide the policies and actions of the international community to invest in people and foster an open and constructive dialogue to build a sustainable future. Members of the international community must work together to ensure that everyone could participate in decision-making, including the most vulnerable, whose human rights and access to resources, tools and technology must be promoted.

42. Panama had established a 24/7 mental health helpline and was implementing social assistance programmes to provide vulnerable families with resources and training. Her Government was investing in education and skills development programmes for youth and women. Panama was promoting collaboration in the public and private sectors and communities to combat poverty and inequality. Spaces where older persons could engage in activities that made them feel valued were being created in the country. Her Government was committed to affirmative action to address the needs of the most vulnerable groups. The multidimensional poverty index was key to identifying areas with the greatest needs and combating the various dimensions of poverty.

43. *Ms. Sorto Rosales (El Salvador), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

44. **Mr. Islamuly** (Kazakhstan) said that progress towards the 2030 Agenda had been reversed in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. To regain momentum, the international community must prioritize social development in responses to crises and national development strategies. The recommendations in the reports of the Secretary-General on social development provided a valuable framework for action. His Government's commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible society was enshrined in its vision of building a just and fair Kazakhstan, which guided its national development strategies.

45. Kazakhstan had responded swiftly to the COVID-19 pandemic with a \$10 billion package to mitigate economic damage and protect vulnerable groups. His Government had recently adopted innovative approaches to social security and had appointed an Ombudsperson to address the rights of socially vulnerable groups. Its action plan on active longevity had improved the lives of older persons. A national project had been launched to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from experienced professionals to young people. His Government had invested in parental leave and childcare, promoted lifelong learning opportunities and established programmes focused on leadership, entrepreneurship and civic engagement. Through a new programme, his Government deposited half the annual investment income from its national wealth fund into savings accounts for every child until the age of 18 years.

46. His Government promoted the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities through legislation that ensured accessibility and provided equal opportunities. Digital public services and e-government platforms delivered social support and financial benefits to vulnerable groups. Kazakhstan was leading efforts to establish a United Nations regional centre for the Sustainable Development Goals for Central Asia and Afghanistan.

47. **Mr. Bokeria** (Georgia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that lack of education was spreading throughout the world like a global pandemic. Climate change, ongoing conflicts and growing humanitarian needs were undermining growth and development and negatively affecting young people. Some 260 million children worldwide were

out of school, and many more faced barriers to quality education, which could affect countries' economic and social success and contribute to the widening inequality gap among nations.

48. Although Georgia faced similar challenges, his Government tailored its educational system to meet students' needs, ensuring that special programmes were in place to support learning, even in remote areas. Despite significant educational reforms implemented by his Government, lack of education remained an issue. Due to the illegal occupation by the Russian Federation of the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, thousands of children there faced discrimination and prohibitions on receiving an education in their native Georgian language. Their access to education was limited, and Georgian literature had been burned in their schools. Despite the danger, Georgian teachers held underground classes in defiance of the oppression.

49. In the current geopolitically tense period, access to education had become more crucial. Devastating conflicts, including the war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, were depriving millions of children of their right to an education. The international community must unite to fight for that right, as young people deserved the opportunity to build a brighter future.

50. The United Nations must establish a digital university that would function on every continent to provide young people with an education. The favourable geographical location of Georgia and its Euro-Atlantic values made his country an ideal centre for the proposed university, which would change the lives of millions of children.

51. **Ms. Kamiya** (Japan) said that focusing on the dignity of all people was indispensable for overcoming current complex worldwide crises and the mounting obstacles to the Sustainable Development Goals. Climate change-induced sea level rise threatened the existence of small island developing States, and conflicts could be triggered and exacerbated by mass flooding, droughts, desertification and land degradation. Japan was striving to overcome those challenges through decarbonization, together with economic growth and energy security. Her country was on track to achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

52. Guided by the principles of human security and inclusivity, Japan would work to achieve universal health coverage. To leave no one behind, the international community must address the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. In April 2024, the amended Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, which made the provision of reasonable accommodation by businesses obligatory, had entered into force in her country. Japan would serve on the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2025–2028. Her country was committed to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as part of its goal of being a more inclusive society.

53. **Mr. Pieris** (Sri Lanka) said that his country, like the global community, had failed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. However, Sri Lanka was a party to all the major International Labour Organization conventions and had implemented them through legislation. The global economic environment had strained his country's ability to meet its population's needs, and persistent inequalities between developed and developing nations threatened to undermine its progress. Members of the international community must collaborate to provide needed support to developing countries through financial assistance, capacity-building initiatives and knowledge-sharing.

54. Vulnerable groups in Sri Lanka were safeguarded through his Government's cash transfer and land rights programmes and a new national social protection policy. Subsidies were provided for low-income persons with disabilities, kidney patients and

school nutrition programmes. His Government prioritized universal health coverage and the expansion of access to higher education through scholarships. As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Sri Lanka had participated in efforts to ensure that persons with disabilities were afforded equal opportunities. The Committee's deliberations must be focused on fostering inclusive growth, reducing inequalities and advancing human dignity.

55. **Mr. Alateek** (Saudi Arabia) said that, given that 67 per cent of the population of Saudi Arabia was under 35 years of age, his Government had developed initiatives to enhance the skills of young people and provide them with suitable job opportunities. Under the Government's youth empowerment programme, more than 100,000 young Saudi men and women had been trained in various fields. A scholarship programme had been launched to enable young Saudis to study at top international universities.

56. Caring for older persons was a top priority of his Government's social policies. Programmes had been developed to increase the quality of life of older persons and provide them with healthcare and social security. Many new social centres and healthcare facilities had been established to provide care for older persons. Home care programmes were also in place, serving more than 40,000 older men and women across the country.

57. His Government had launched a comprehensive rehabilitation programme to provide education and healthcare to persons with disabilities. More than 150 specialized centres had been established to provide medical and social rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities. His Government had also introduced a programme to promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the public and the private sectors.

58. His Government had rolled out several initiatives to strengthen the role of the family in social development, including a social security programme covering more than 800,000 Saudi families and a programme to support low-income families. Education was a top priority of his Government. In 2023, the primary school enrolment rate in Saudi Arabia had increased to more than 99 per cent.

59. **Mr. Kasmi** (Albania), speaking as a youth delegate, said that he represented thousands of young Albanians whose communities were suffering from poor infrastructure, limited job opportunities and a lack of quality education. Youth were currently facing the consequences of conflict, inequality and climate disasters. If young people were to be the pioneers of a better world, they must shape the future.

60. All nations must strengthen the youth delegate programme to guarantee the inclusion of young voices in high-level decision-making processes. Contributions to the United Nations Youth Fund were needed to support youth representatives from developing countries. His delegation advocated the use of quotas and other mechanisms to ensure the equal representation of girls and women. Equal representation was a necessity for inclusive and sustainable solutions.

61. **Ms. Delija** (Albania), speaking as a youth delegate, said that she was engaged in the Climate Youth Negotiators Programme, which supported intergenerational leadership. She called upon Member States, especially those from the Western Balkans region, to join such programmes to support the meaningful engagement of young people in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change processes. Albania had experienced the impacts of economic inequality, limited access to quality education and rapid migration. The Western Balkans must ensure that its youth had opportunities to thrive within its borders rather than seeking better prospects abroad.

62. Her Government was implementing a programme to support young people under 29 years of age who were not in employment, education or training through job placements, vocational training or further education. Albania had adopted a national strategy for migration for the period 2024–2030, intended to safeguard migrants' rights while fostering their integration into society. By welcoming Afghan refugees, her country had supported humanitarian principles and provided a safe haven to those in need. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Albania had committed to advancing human rights issues relating to children in conflict zones.

63. **Mr. Muhamad** (Malaysia) said that his country was promoting inclusive social development on the basis of the principle of leaving no one behind. His Government had allocated 30 billion Malaysian ringgit for the period 2023–2024 to eradicate poverty by creating job opportunities and enhancing social protection.

64. In 2023, Malaysia had enacted the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act and had amended its penal and criminal procedure codes to include the offence of stalking. His Government would strengthen legislative frameworks to address discrimination against women. Malaysia had recently launched a youth development model to complement its youth policy and align youth empowerment efforts with national and global agendas. The model was focused on employment, finance, mental health and leadership. Malaysia was developing a blueprint for its ageing nation agenda, which was focused on economy, education and health. His Government was seeking to strengthen the care sector and thereby address the needs of older persons, persons with disabilities and children.

65. **Ms. Althehli** (United Arab Emirates), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her country was committed to achieving comprehensive social development and attached the utmost importance to youth development, care for older persons and support for persons with disabilities. Collective efforts must be strengthened and regional and international partnerships established to tackle the growing global challenges and take advantage of technological progress to achieve sustainable development for all.

66. Her Government viewed young people as key partners in nation-building and pillars of development and progress, and was thus working to strengthen institutional frameworks for the participation of young people in national policies. Since 2017, youth councils had been established around the country. The United Arab Emirates had recently launched a youth climate delegates programme, which was the largest initiative to promote the participation of young people around the world in climate negotiations.

67. **Mr. Alsuwaidi** (United Arab Emirates), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people in his country believed that the best way to achieve sustainable development, peace and security was to empower all segments of society, including persons with disabilities, to participate in a comprehensive development process. In 2021, his Government had launched an initiative to encourage persons with disabilities who were able to work to enter the labour market by enabling them to take jobs that matched their abilities and qualifications, while ensuring their access to support services and assistive devices.

68. Older persons in the United Arab Emirates were referred to as “senior citizens” out of respect for their efforts in serving the nation. A national senior citizens policy had been developed with the aim of expanding healthcare services for older persons, including at long-term care facilities and through home care programmes.

69. The United Arab Emirates remained firmly committed to cooperating with all Member States to empower young people both nationally and internationally. To invest in young people, older persons and persons with disabilities was to invest in the future of the entire world.

70. **Mr. Aarheim** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the international community must stand firm in its belief that social development and social justice could not be attained in the absence of peace and security and human rights. In 2024, quality education should include digital knowledge. The safe navigation of online information must be integrated into school curricula, and youth must be equipped with the right tools to use the Internet safely and effectively. Social development required that everyone, regardless of gender, had the same opportunities to learn, work and lead.

71. **Ms. Hillestad** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the trauma experienced by children living in armed conflict was beyond devastating. A consequence of such situations was a loss of access to education. Living in war could set children's education back years, undermining their faith in the future and their belief in human rights and the possibility for peace. Armed conflict resulted in a decline in gender equality. Women and girls in situations of conflict were affected by increased sexual violence and disruptions in healthcare, which had long-term consequences in societies. While working to end war, the international community must remain committed to social development in regions of conflict and should focus on reducing the long-lasting effects of conflicts.

72. **Ms. Borg Aquilina** (Malta), speaking as a youth delegate, said that it was thanks to future generations that countries had invested time and effort in the Pact for the Future, the Declaration on Future Generations and the Global Digital Compact. The Summit of the Future had allowed young persons to have a say on the challenges that affected them. Because young people's future was already marked by shocks and multifaceted crises, their interests must be placed at the core of decision-making, thereby ensuring the realization of their priorities.

73. Around the world, although young people were leading the way in resolving those crises, young women and LGBTQI+ persons continued to face violence, marginalization, and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. From exclusion from decision-making to reprisals for advocacy, those barriers reflected broader societal issues and must be removed. Malta was determined to dismantle patriarchal power structures that perpetuated inequalities and left young women, adolescents and girls on the margins. Investing in quality education, sexual and reproductive health, social protection systems and employment was vital to prepare young persons for the digital and green transitions.

74. The United Nations must create platforms for meaningful youth participation in all areas of decision-making, not only those viewed as youth-focused. The full potential of young people as partners rather than consultants in policymaking must be harnessed. A future that was truly inclusive and peaceful could be achieved only when young persons were trusted as valuable contributors, not despite their age but because of it.

75. **Mr. Lagorio** (Argentina) said that population ageing was a global reality that required global responses. While population ageing was a significant achievement of humanity, it also presented a challenge for societies, which must adapt their policies to guarantee a decent standard of living for older persons and uphold their human rights. His delegation was in favour of elaborating a legally binding instrument to tackle those problems and protect the human rights of older persons. Intergenerational solidarity should be fostered with a view to promoting better understanding of the problems affecting older persons and combating negative stereotypes about ageing.

76. The international human rights system had been shown to offer inadequate protection for older persons. The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, which had been chaired by Argentina since its establishment, had, at its most recent session, adopted a decision that constituted the first intergovernmental document with

recommendations on identifying possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and the best way to overcome them.

77. **Mr. Moussa** (Djibouti) said that, in his country's national development plan, digitalization and digital transformation were viewed as having the potential to foster a dynamic and inclusive economy. By employing ICT, Djibouti would be able to accelerate its social development and increase the coverage of its social and economic services. Those objectives would be accomplished through the implementation of programmes to support interconnectivity among the regions and cities of Djibouti and the establishment of digital platforms and modern infrastructure to connect with the rest of the world.

78. The Djibouti 2035 vision had given new impetus to the development and dissemination of ICT. His Government's development policy for the ICT sector had the primary aim of reducing the digital divide in Djibouti. The policy would also contribute to the development of an ICT hub with international reach and a focus on the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

79. Djibouti could boost its development by taking advantage of its submarine cable infrastructure, consisting of 11 Internet relay cables, 8 of which were fibre-optic, to increase mobile and Internet coverage. ICTs were being used in Djibouti to extend and improve social services and to reduce the gaps between cities and between urban and rural areas. Access to education and healthcare had been improved through the establishment of online learning and health platforms covering the entire country.

80. His Government planned to roll out a unified social register and a comprehensive national digital identification system, which would facilitate access to public services, cash transfer programmes and banking and financial services. In some cities in Djibouti, digital identification was already used to obtain access to basic services, such as electricity, water and waste disposal, and to facilitate land registration and tax payments.

81. **Ms. Milurović** (Serbia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people should be able to decide on their own future and be encouraged to participate actively in the development of policies that would shape their lives. The adoption by her Government of a youth strategy and action plan and the drafting of a new law on youth showed that young people formed the heart of Serbian society. Her Government financed projects for the development and meaningful participation of young people and had made investing in high-quality, inclusive education a priority.

82. Serbia would chair the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence over the coming three years. The Partnership, together with the Global Digital Compact, should pave the way for the ethical use of artificial intelligence. Global leaders and innovators should make a real effort to involve young people in the dialogue on artificial intelligence.

83. **Mr. Dizdarević** (Serbia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, in the face of the triple planetary crisis, adaptation efforts must be intensified and sustainable financing mechanisms devised. Given that young people were particularly affected by climate change, their messages must be heard. Serbia had demonstrated its commitment to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 13, on climate action, through the submission of its revised nationally determined contribution in 2022 and the adoption of its climate change adaptation programme in 2023.

84. An exhibition on the theme "Play for humanity: sports and music for all" would be held in Belgrade in 2027, with the aim of emphasizing the contribution of imagination, creativity and playfulness to science, innovation and social development. The global community was invited to join in investing in the potential of young people.

85. Young people were not mere spectators but rather critical actors in world affairs. An intergenerational dialogue should be established to tackle global issues and build a sustainable future.

86. **Ms. Dbouk** (Lebanon) said that the ongoing Israeli aggression against her country did not distinguish between civilians and fighters or between military targets and civilian objects. Lebanon, which had not yet recovered from the catastrophic Beirut port explosion or from the collapse of its currency, was now facing further economic and social deterioration as a result of the hostile acts perpetrated against it.

87. The continued Israeli aggression had led to the killing of 1,974 people, including more than 100 children and 200 women, the wounding of 9,384, including more than 690 children, and the internal displacement of over 1.2 million. Shockingly, on one day in September, air strikes had led to the killing of 558 people, including 50 children, 94 women and 4 health workers, and the wounding of 1,835 others. In addition, most centres for displaced persons were at capacity, and displaced persons who had not found shelter were sleeping on the streets.

88. The brutal aggression had also hindered the olive, tobacco and banana harvests, which were many people's source of livelihood in the south. According to a recent study by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, UNICEF and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the agricultural sector in Lebanon had been devastated due to the relentless use by Israel of white phosphorus bombs, with some 1,779 hectares of agricultural land damaged as at September 2024. According to the national centre for natural hazards and early warning in Lebanon, Israel had dropped 252 incendiary bombs and 248 phosphorus shells on the country as at 1 October 2024. Her delegation could not overstate the psychological stress experienced by the Lebanese population, children in particular, as a result. They were not living, but merely surviving.

89. **Ms. Andújar** (Dominican Republic) said that her country had made significant progress in social development through the implementation of programmes and policies to guarantee the fundamental human rights of persons with disabilities and ensure their equal access to education, employment and basic services. Training and employment programmes had been developed and support was provided to facilitate the full participation of persons with disabilities in the community.

90. Her Government had implemented various educational and vocational training programmes with the aim of equipping young people with the skills needed to obtain better job opportunities and breaking the vicious cycle that led to inequality in access to those opportunities. At a side event organized by the Dominican Republic during the recent high-level week of the General Assembly, participants had emphasized the need for education to be at the centre of sustainable development, with schools transformed into real centres of development and forming an integral part of public policies. Participants had thus called for regional action to increase public investment in education and allocate a greater proportion of official development assistance to education.

91. The Dominican Republic was committed to ensuring that older persons had equal access to fundamental human rights and were able to live a full life free from discrimination. Her Government had implemented initiatives to improve the quality of life of older persons, ensuring that their rights were not ignored in the development and implementation of public policies. Her Government had also implemented a food security programme, under which financial support was provided to eligible households to supplement food purchases, and a plan to enable families in various socioeconomic situations to buy their first home with subsidies.

92. **Mr. Van Schalkwyk** (South Africa) said that, following the end of apartheid 30 years previously, the new democratic Government of South Africa had embarked on comprehensive policy and legislative reforms with the aim of transforming society. Significant investments had been made in education, skills development, healthcare and employment, with a substantial portion of the gross domestic product of South Africa dedicated to those sectors. As a result, the education policies of South Africa ensured inclusive, equitable and high-quality education for all.

93. South Africa was experiencing a shift towards an ageing population, with the population of older persons growing from 2.8 million in 1996 to 6.1 million in 2022. Such a shift often placed a greater burden on family caregivers, particularly women. His Government had therefore adopted a hybrid social protection model designed to cover the entire life cycle.

94. Like many developing countries, South Africa was grappling with the challenge of translating the potential of greater connectivity into a benefit for every citizen. His Government had made improving digital literacy a priority, with a view to equipping people with the skills to harness the potential of digital technologies.

95. **Ms. Pierre Fabre** (Haiti) said that fulfilling the commitments made almost 30 years previously at the World Summit for Social Development remained a challenge for a large number of countries. The Second World Summit for Social Development, to be held in 2025, would be an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm those commitments, strengthen solidarity and promote social justice, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

96. The multidimensional crisis affecting Haiti was exacerbating the already difficult situation of the Haitian people and the social inequalities within the country. The Haitian authorities were aware that, during the country's transition, the necessary measures must be taken to establish security and peace, which were preconditions for rebuilding legitimate State institutions to provide a secure and better future for the Haitian people. Her Government was determined to uphold its commitments and adopt national initiatives to overcome the crisis. International solidarity was needed to achieve that objective.

97. **Mr. Moriko** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the many crises facing the world were having significant impacts on his country's social system and were exacerbating the vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities, children, young people, women and older persons. His Government was therefore implementing a programme to strengthen inclusion, solidarity and social action to support vulnerable people.

98. A commitment to combating all forms of discrimination against older persons and persons with disabilities was reflected in the social programmes that were being implemented under his country's national development plan for the period 2021–2025. His Government was committed to facilitating the access of older persons to social protection instruments and basic social services. With a view to reducing the vulnerabilities of older persons, his Government had developed a supplementary pension scheme and a social insurance scheme for self-employed people that covered older workers. His Government had also established a platform to promote the skills and experience of older persons.

99. His Government was implementing an ambitious programme aimed at accelerating the training of young people and their integration into the labour market and promoting youth entrepreneurship. Technical education and vocational training programmes had been reformed to meet the needs of employers. His Government encouraged the participation of young people in decision-making bodies with a view to increasing their contribution to sustainable development processes.

100. **Mr. Benamour** (Morocco) said that a multifaceted and intergenerational approach was needed to address the interconnected challenges of closing the digital gap, ensuring intergenerational solidarity and promoting literacy. Investments should be made in high-quality education, including science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, to harness the potential and strengthen the capacities of young people for a sustainable future. Measures to ensure a successful transition from education to work and adequate policies for lifelong learning and reskilling, particularly in information and digital technologies, were also needed. Investments should be made in infrastructure to ensure the inclusivity of and affordable access to technology, education and healthcare, particularly in rural areas. The rising feminization of poverty must be combated by empowering young women and ensuring their access to political opportunities.

101. His Government had adopted a set of actions in line with the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General on information and digital technologies for advancing social development. For example, the recently launched Digital Morocco 2030 strategy was aimed at creating 240,000 jobs by 2030, digitalizing public services and revitalizing the digital economy. In addition, a new mobile payment method had been piloted for the delivery of conditional cash transfers under the national strategy for financial inclusion.

102. Given the need for collaborative efforts to harness the benefits of artificial intelligence for sustainable development while upholding human rights and the principles of inclusivity and sustainability, Morocco, together with the United States of America, had been the main sponsor of General Assembly resolution [78/265](#), the inaugural resolution on artificial intelligence, and had launched a group of friends on artificial intelligence for sustainable development.

103. **Mr. Thomas** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that the protection of the most vulnerable people was deeply embedded in the governance mechanisms of his country. Empowering the most vulnerable people was the guiding principle that drove his country's commitment to fostering a society in which every individual was provided with an opportunity for development.

104. An effective and responsive United Nations was needed to tackle global health issues, particularly those affecting small island developing States. The high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases and mental health to be held during the eightieth session of the General Assembly would be an opportunity to tackle those challenges head-on. Non-communicable diseases and mental health issues had a disproportionate impact on small island developing States, exacting a heavy toll on their healthcare systems and the well-being and productivity of their citizens.

105. His country's commitment to tackling those challenges had been reinforced through its hosting of the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States. The Conference's outcome document, entitled "The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States: A Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity", served as a comprehensive 10-year framework and sustainable development plan for small island developing States. The critical need to address the vulnerabilities of specific groups within small island developing States, including women, young people, older persons and persons with disabilities, had been underscored in the Agenda.

106. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that, since the illegal military coup attempt in his country in February 2021, more than 5,700 people had been killed by the military junta, and over 3.4 million people had been displaced. Of the more than 18.6 million people who were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, more than half were women and girls. Nevertheless, women were at the forefront of efforts to fight against the military dictatorship and restore democracy in Myanmar.

107. Some of the more than 6 million children who had been displaced in Myanmar were continuing their education in makeshift camps and bunkers owing to aerial attacks and heavy artillery shelling by the military junta. Children in Myanmar were at risk of food insecurity, malnutrition and forced recruitment by the military. Persons with disabilities in Myanmar, especially women with disabilities, were facing accessibility challenges and frequent violations of their rights. Many people had lost body parts as a result of the junta's aerial attacks and landmines.

108. Some young people had left Myanmar to avoid arbitrary arrests by the junta. The junta's forced conscription had led to mass migration and brain drain from Myanmar. The recent Typhoon Yagi had further exacerbated the displacement and suffering of the people and the humanitarian situation in Myanmar.

109. The people of Myanmar had persistently appealed to the international community and the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, to take effective action to save lives and prevent the junta's atrocities, including by stopping the supply of arms, weapons and jet fuel and the provision of financial support to the military junta.

110. Any election organized by the military junta in the current situation would never be free, fair or inclusive. His delegation called upon the international community to join it in strongly opposing the junta's planned sham election, which would only create more violence and prolong the conflict.

111. **Ms. Gisinti** (Italy), speaking as a youth delegate, said that States must make chapter IV of the Pact for the Future a reality. The participation of young people should be systematic, not merely tokenistic, in all fields, because every issue was a youth issue. The agreements reached must be turned into tangible action, with young people included and special attention given to the marginalized and underrepresented.

112. In a world facing the highest number of conflicts since the Second World War, young people had a vital contribution to make to peace and security. States must adopt national action plans to support the youth and peace and security agenda. The implementation of that agenda would ensure that young people were included in national policies and would strengthen peacebuilding efforts. The agenda was a means not only to enhance peace but also to revitalize multilateralism.

113. **Mr. Granata** (Italy), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the persistent gaps between young people, not only between countries but also locally, from region to region and between metropolitan and rural areas, must be addressed. Investing in high-quality education was pivotal for combating marginalization and fostering social inclusion. Non-formal education should also be promoted to reawaken young people's sense of curiosity and drive positive change.

114. In the digital era, young people required innovative tools to ensure that digital technologies enhanced, rather than replaced, their skills. Enhancing vocational training and investing in youth-led social and sustainable entrepreneurship would provide the necessary conditions for young people to take the future into their own hands. Integrated and intergenerational approaches should be embraced to dispel the misconception that the inclusion of young people in decision-making would benefit only young people and to revitalize trust in institutions.

115. **Ms. Reize** (Germany), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, for the past 20 years, German youth delegates had been participating in the General Assembly, demanding the full, effective and meaningful participation of young people in all sectors. Every year, German youth delegates had conducted workshops throughout Germany to gather the opinions of young people and share them with the Assembly.

116. Unfortunately, not every country had a youth delegate, and most youth delegates were from the global North. Youth participation should not be accessible only to young people with an academic background and the financial stability to dedicate time to voluntary, unpaid endeavours. Robust capacity-building, funding and equitable access to opportunities were needed for all young people.

117. Civil society organizations equipped young people with the knowledge and skills to speak out for their rights. The United Nations should provide meaningful spaces for civil society to ensure that diverse perspectives were considered in its work and global governance efforts.

118. The past 20 years had seen achievements such as the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office and the adoption of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), on youth and peace and security, and the Pact for the Future, with its chapter on youth and future generations. Nevertheless, social, structural and financial barriers remained, and youth participation was not yet mandatory in all areas.

119. **Ms. Rushdi** (Maldives) said that, to ensure that her country's development was sustainable, inclusive and equitable, her Government had made it a priority to enhance the digital economy and digitalize public services. In Maldives, the rate of primary school enrolment stood at 96 per cent, the infant mortality rate was steadily declining, and the average life expectancy was over 80 years. Maldives was working with UNICEF, the World Bank and other partners to transform education by making it inclusive and promoting digital learning and the acquisition of transferable skills. A presidential youth advisory board had been established in August 2024. To empower women entrepreneurs, her Government had launched a \$6.5 million loan facility, 25 per cent of which was dedicated to women with disabilities.

120. Maldives had limited land, and its population was consolidated mainly around the capital. Her Government had implemented several reclamation, infrastructure, urban development and connectivity projects to uphold the constitutional right of the citizens of Maldives to housing and fundamental services. Often overlooked groups such as single parents and young working families were given priority in urban development and housing projects.

121. Her Government was working to improve the healthcare sector by expanding mental health services through an online platform. Preventative care, routine check-ups and fertility treatments were being incorporated into the national health insurance scheme.

122. As a small island developing State, Maldives was aware that society was only as strong as its most vulnerable member. Her Government was therefore working to enable the participation of those who had been historically marginalized due to age, gender, disability, economic status or geography.

123. **Mr. Maniratanga** (Burundi) said that poverty eradication was a top priority of his Government, because poverty was one of the main obstacles to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. His Government had implemented several initiatives to support the socioeconomic development of young people and women, including the creation of dedicated investment banks to encourage their economic empowerment and the launch of a youth empowerment and employment programme. The President of Burundi had been designated as the African Union champion for youth and peace and security.

124. Digital education should be provided from the earliest age, with digital literacy embedded in school curricula. The impact of technology on the well-being of young people should be assessed. Such an approach would shape future citizens who were not only consumers of technology but were also informed and responsible, thus helping to reduce digital inequalities in the long term. Young people needed to be

prepared to face the challenges of an increasingly digitalized world. Adequate financial support and active international cooperation were essential for enabling countries of the global South to reap the benefits of the digital age and implement policies to reduce the digital divide.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.
