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Chair: Mr. Maniratanga (Burundi)
later: Ms. Lortkipanidze (Vice-Chair) (Georgia)

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

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (A/79/112, A/79/322, A/79/325, A/79/500 and A/79/514)

1. **Ms. Gumbonzvanda** (Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, United Nations System Coordination and Programme Results of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on trafficking in women and girls: strengthening access to justice for victim-survivors (A/79/322), said that women and girls were disproportionately affected by trafficking in persons and physical violence. In the report, the Secretary-General recommended actions that improved access to gender-sensitive justice, especially through the provision of free legal aid and the full application of the non-punishment principle. Anti-trafficking measures should be explicitly integrated into comprehensive national action plans on violence against women, survivors must be given long-term, comprehensive reintegration support and a renewed focus was needed on prevention.

2. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (A/79/500), she said that rapid technological change was intensifying violence against women and girls, with perpetrators using digital tools, including artificial intelligence, to inflict abuse. Women in public life, including politicians, activists and young women and girls, were at greatest risk. Sustainable Development Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls could not be achieved when online violence was directed at women involved in decision-making processes. In the report, the Secretary-General called for a whole-of-government approach, working across the online-offline continuum to improve access to justice and sustainable funding for women's rights organizations, and for the development of international standards to address technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.

3. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation (A/79/514), she said that attempts to reverse legislation criminalizing female genital mutilation (FGM) were deeply concerning and undermined global standards on and commitments to ending that practice. As of 2024, there were 230 million girls who had been subjected to FGM globally, an increase of 15 per cent since 2016, and the practice had become increasingly medicalized, despite no evidence demonstrating that the medicalization of FGM was safer for women. In the report, the Secretary-General recommended that States enact or enforce existing laws criminalizing FGM and address the social, cultural and economic roots underpinning that practice. They should also fulfil their obligations to protect and promote the rights of women and girls under international human rights law.

4. **Ms. Flores** (United States of America) said that women, girls and others impacted by human rights violations and abuses were too often viewed as statistics, rather than as survivors and leaders with unique needs and knowledge. Their full and meaningful participation in human rights investigations was essential to understanding the full extent of underlying gendered power dynamics. The input of survivors was necessary to the development of holistic reports, the creation of sustainable solutions and the achievement of peace and security for all. That input was a central tenet of her country's approach to issues including trafficking in persons. Experts, particularly those with lived experience, were engaged in and compensated for their expertise and input using a trafficking expert consultant network.

5. Her delegation would be interested in the best practices for States to gather input from women, girls and other LGBTIQI+ survivors without placing on them the burden of solving human rights issues.
6. **Ms. Greffine** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that full and equal enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights was under increased pressure in places like Afghanistan, where women were denied human rights through a new so-called morality law.
7. Armed conflicts disproportionately impacted women and girls, and her delegation condemned conflict-related sexual violence. In the European Union, Ukrainian women and girls faced a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence due to the Russian war of aggression.
8. She asked UN-Women to share more information on the implementation status of the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality, how the entity aimed to ensure that other agencies were sufficiently engaged in the implementation of that plan and how it intended to utilize its mandate to strengthen the development of global norms and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
9. **Ms. Hardwick** (Austria) said that, despite commitments to Sustainable Development Goal 5, the world was experiencing an appalling backlash against gender equality and the rights of women and girls. Data and evidence demonstrated that gender equality had enormous positive socioeconomic ramifications, spurring productivity and growth. Member States needed to come together to achieve a renewed political commitment that reflected the rapid changes taking place in the global community.
10. She asked UN-Women how the momentum of the 30-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+30) could be used to propel gender equality and the rights of women and girls to a new level.
11. **Ms. Zhang Sisi** (China) said that her country attached great importance to the advancement of the causes of women and consistently strengthened policy support for issues concerning women. China had implemented a national action plan to promote the comprehensive development of women, which ensured the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of women in areas including health, education, employment, social security and family and marriage. China had fully and promptly fulfilled its financial commitments to UN-Women, including five-year donations of \$10 million in both 2015 and 2020, and hoped to use Beijing+30 as an opportunity to further strength global cooperation with UN-Women on issues concerning women.
12. **Ms. Lula** (Poland) said that her country shared the commitment of UN-Women to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls. However, many regions continued to face barriers to effectively addressing violence, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine had starkly highlighted the issue of conflict-related sexual violence. Russian forces were using sexual violence as a weapon of war against Ukrainian women and girls. Those acts were systematic, deliberate violations that sought to instil fear, exert control and destroy the fabric of communities. The need for comprehensive support for survivors in that context was critical.
13. She asked what strategies UN-Women considered most effective in addressing the stigma surrounding violence in conflict settings, and in what ways local communities, including men and boys, could engage in prevention efforts and in fighting for justice.

14. **Ms. Espinosa** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her country was a steadfast ally of the work of UN-Women and had achieved significant milestones since 2010, including hosting the Generation Equality Forum, launching the Global Alliance for Care and implementing the Spotlight Initiative. However, Mexico continued to face challenges to sexual and reproductive rights, and to protections against gender-based violence and bodily autonomy. A feminist foreign policy, implemented in 2020, guided Mexico in defending the rights of women.

15. **Ms. Konneh** (Liberia) said that her delegation acknowledged the progress made towards the advancement of women and girls around the world and reflected on the challenges they still faced, especially in Liberia. As in other countries, Liberian women faced barriers to economic, political and social realization and advancement. Revised gender policy reports in Liberia showed that sociocultural perceptions, practices and stereotypes supporting male dominance contributed to problems with gender equality and the marginalization of women.

16. **Ms. Dabo N'Diaye** (Mali) asked UN-Women for recommendations on how to reverse cultural opposition that prevented women from fully enjoying their rights. She also asked for more information on repressive laws related to FGM, the practice of which had recently increased.

17. **Ms. Gumbonzvanda** (Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, United Nations System Coordination and Programme Results of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), responding to the question from the representative of the United States, said that there were social, economic and power dimensions underlying violence against women. The primary responsibilities of the State were enforcing laws in a just manner and building a society in which there were equal opportunities for all. Empowering women to have a voice and be part of finding solutions was important, as was reform of justice systems, so that women were not re-victimized and treated as criminals.

18. In response to the questions on the promotion of general equality posed by the representative of the European Union, she said that the existing mechanism, which brought together different United Nations entities, was coordinated by the Office of the Secretary-General with leadership from the Deputy Secretary-General. In addition to that global coordination, the in-country work done by UN-Women with Member States was equally important to the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality. There were many examples of how UN-Women used its unique mandate to support the normative work of Member States, including joint programmes on violence against women, work related to ending child marriage and FGM and integrating gender equality indicators into the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund.

19. The first step to ending gender-based violence in conflict settings was to end conflicts, as doing so reduced the risk of violence against women and girls. It was also important to link such efforts with Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security.

20. In response to the question from the representative of Austria, she said that the backlash against gender equality and the rights of women and girls was due to patriarchal attitudes, discrimination and backsliding on laws that protected those rights. Member States had a responsibility to uphold the international standards that they themselves had set and United Nations Secretariat staff would advise Member States when backsliding occurred. A move from formal equality to substantive equality was critical, and Beijing+30 offered an opportunity to achieve that. She looked forward to a discussion by Member States on sustaining the focus on gender equality.

21. In response to the question from the representative of Poland, she said that she looked forward to Member States providing a path towards political solutions and ceasefires. Working on stigma required a shift in attitude, as well as working with women-led organizations that were in daily contact with survivors of gender-based violence and their families.

22. Lastly, welcoming the other comments and questions, including from Mali and Mexico, she said that she would provide further information on the specific issues raised in writing owing to time constraints.

23. **Mr. Abdelmohsen** (Chief, Sexual and Reproductive Health Branch of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on intensifying efforts to end obstetric fistula within a decade ([A/79/112](#)), said that although obstetric fistula was preventable and treatable, half a million women and girls globally suffered from that condition, with thousands of new cases occurring each year. Since 2016, there had been no progress in the annual reduction of maternal deaths.

24. Obstetric fistula was caused by prolonged obstetric labour without timely access to skilled birth attendants and medical intervention. Aside from urinary incontinence, it was associated with other severe medical consequences, mental trauma, social isolation and economic hardship. Obstetric fistula deepened existing vulnerabilities and was an injustice that exposed significant systematic gaps in maternal healthcare and universal health coverage.

25. Ending obstetric fistula by 2030 was achievable. The report recommended key areas where collective action could make a greater difference. Preventing child and teenage pregnancies would prevent prolonged obstetric labour, and allowing access to skilled birth attendants could also help to eliminate obstetric fistula. It was critical to tackle the root causes of obstetric fistula, including poverty and gender inequality, as well as contributing factors such as child marriage and adolescent pregnancy. Surgery was safe, and women needed to have access to that service and to be aware that it could change their lives for the better.

26. Strengthened data collection and research efforts enhanced by digital technologies were key to accurately monitoring progress toward ending obstetric fistula. Country leadership, coupled with financial and technical support and continued advocacy, was also critical. The report urged all stakeholders to prioritize quality maternal healthcare and the well-being of women and girls. With bold political leadership and investment, maternal deaths could be prevented and obstetric fistula and other childbirth injuries could be eradicated, leading to improved health and well-being for women and girls.

27. **Ms. Salem** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that civilians in the Gaza Strip were enduring an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the context of Israeli aggression, which had impacted the physical, mental and sexual and reproductive health of women and girls. She called upon Member States to support the UNFPA teams that were aiding women and girls in the Gaza Strip and areas of the West Bank.

28. She asked UNFPA what the main obstacles were to treating reproductive issues faced by Palestinian women in both the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

29. **Ms. Mate-Kodjo** (United States of America) said that the 30-year review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development underscored the strides that countries continued to make in implementing the Programme of Action. It also underscored the stalled progress, particularly on sexual, reproductive and maternal health and gender-based violence.

30. Her delegation supported the transformative mandate of UNFPA on ending gender-based violence, specifically child marriage and FGM and cutting. In that context, she asked what the key priorities of UNFPA were in scaling global efforts to end FGM and cutting.

31. **Ms. Koch** (Germany) said that bodily autonomy was a fundamental right, but it was not accessible to all, particularly young people. Systems of oppression, including ableism, often limited reproductive rights, agency and autonomy. Harmful practices such as FGM were further examples of how young women and girls were denied control over their bodies. The need for affordable and confidential access to contraception and reproductive healthcare was urgent.

32. The opposition of parents or guardians to their children accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare was a critical challenge. Even when the choices of young people regarding their bodily autonomy conflicted with parental preferences, it was imperative to uphold the right to bodily autonomy.

33. Frameworks that supported the reproductive rights of young people must focus on accessibility and inclusivity. In that context, she asked what frameworks UNFPA had in place to ensure that young people could fully exercise their right to bodily autonomy.

34. **Ms. Carlé** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the continued failure to eradicate harmful practices such as FGM was a symptom of the alarming trend of backsliding in gender equality and in the rights of women and girls. Obstetric fistula and FGM should be addressed holistically, based on human rights and gender-responsive action.

35. Her delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the right of individuals to have full control over and to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including their sexual and reproductive health, free from coercion, discrimination and violence. The European Union had acted on that commitment within the Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation and through the allocation of 20 million euros to a joint initiative to end preventable maternal deaths in Africa.

36. She asked UNFPA how access to resources with proven results for women and girls suffering from obstetric fistula or undergoing FGM could be streamlined.

37. **Ms. Diop** (Senegal) asked UNFPA what efforts should be mobilized by the United Nations and its financial supporters to assist women who suffered from obstetric fistula, particularly in developing countries.

38. **Ms. Krzesnicka** (Poland) said that, for many years, Poland had supported efforts by UNFPA to end obstetric fistula in developing countries. In 2024, Poland had become a donor to the general budget of UNFPA to more broadly support the activities of the organization and the implementation of its mandate.

39. She asked how Member States could ensure that they did not lose sight of the developmental dimension of the work of UNFPA while providing much needed emergency assistance to protect the rights and health of women and girls.

40. **Ms. Dabo N'Diaye** (Mali) asked how, in the context of social and cultural environments, UNFPA used the educational system to raise awareness of and protect girls from obstetric fistula.

41. **Mr. Abdelmohsen** (Chief, Sexual and Reproductive Health Branch of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that the questions posed reflected the gravity of the situation and how much the international community needed to work together to prevent obstetric fistula. Preventing and eradicating obstetric fistula was

a matter not only of educating parents, but also of educating young girls about the importance of their reproductive lives. Furthermore, healthcare meant educating women to make the right reproductive decisions, including by having access to contraception.

42. In response to the question raised by the representative of the State of Palestine, he said that major obstacles to treating reproductive issues faced by Palestinian women included having skilled birth attendants, trained midwives and physicians, and having access to essential maternal health commodities.

43. In response to questions from the representatives from Germany and the European Union, he said that UNFPA would be happy to engage in discussions regarding how to measure bodily autonomy. He thanked the European Union for its contributions to the joint initiative to end preventable maternal deaths in Africa and called upon all partners to continue working together with UNFPA to save lives.

44. *Ms. Lortkipanidze (Georgia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

45. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), speaking via video link, said that, over the past year, the Committee had held constructive dialogues with 25 States and had adopted concluding observations on their reports. Unfortunately, only six lists of issues in relation to reports from States parties and nine lists of issues prior to reporting had been adopted, as one of the three pre-sessional meetings of the Committee had been cancelled as a result of the liquidity crisis. Of the 189 States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, only 13 had chosen not to avail themselves of the simplified reporting procedure. The Committee had considered and processed eight individual complaints, finding violations of the authors' rights in six cases of sexual harassment of women in detention and failure to identify victims of trafficking. Under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, the Committee had adopted a report on an investigation into restricted access to abortion. In December of 2023, a confidential fact-finding visit had been carried out to a State party in relation to abductions of women and girls by armed groups.

46. At the end of its current session, the Committee would adopt draft general recommendation No. 40, on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, which called for parity in all decision-making systems and the adoption of specific national action plans on parity between men and women in decision-making systems. In 2024, the Committee had adopted a concept note for draft general recommendation No. 41, on gender stereotypes.

47. The Committee remained deeply concerned about the continuation of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, as a tactic of war. It was alarmed by reports of sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflict, including sexual exploitation in camps for internally displaced persons in a State party to the Convention. The Committee had received an exceptional report from that State party, which would be considered in February 2025.

48. The Committee, responding to the high number of women and children killed, wounded and displaced by the war in the Middle East, had called for an immediate ceasefire and the restoration of peace. The Committee had also issued a statement that institutionalized violations of the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan might amount to gender-based persecution. In that regard, it had decided to explore the possibility of examining the situation in Afghanistan within the framework of the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review.

49. In March 2024, she had had the honour of briefing an Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on the synergies between the Convention and the women and peace and security agenda.

50. The lack of adequate financial resources for the treaty bodies to truly fulfil their mandates was a constant concern that jeopardized their mandates. Nevertheless, progress had been made in harmonizing the jurisprudence of the treaty bodies, and the biennial General Assembly resolution on the human rights treaty body system, scheduled for adoption in December 2024, would require a clear and strong economic commitment on the part of the States parties so that the process of strengthening those bodies could continue. It was no longer possible for the treaty bodies to hold hybrid meetings with interpretation, which, regrettably, would limit the participation of and access by non-governmental organizations and persons with disabilities.

51. The Committee had undertaken important work in 2024 as Co-Chair of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women. Terms of reference and an action plan for the Platform had been developed, which would strengthen its role. The Platform would soon approve a position paper on Beijing+30.

52. **Ms. Nyirinkindi** (Chair of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls), introducing the reports of the Working Group ([A/HRC/56/51](#), [A/HRC/56/51/Add.1](#) and [A/HRC/53/39/Add.2](#)), said that, in 2018, the Working Group had warned of the resurgence of a conservative and retrogressive narrative in international forums and within countries that was accompanied by attempts to reinstate policies or legislation harmful to women and girls, especially in the areas of family life and bodily autonomy. That backlash was intensifying, and an extreme example was found in Afghanistan. During its mission to Afghanistan in 2023, the Working Group had witnessed first-hand the pattern of large-scale and systematic violations of women's and girls' fundamental rights, which constituted an institutionalized framework of apartheid based on gender.

53. **Ms. Alsalem** (Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences), introducing her report on violence against women and girls in sports ([A/79/325](#)), said that progress in women's empowerment had been offset by alarming developments. Women and girls in conflict settings had been the victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual and reproductive violence as tools of war. In Palestine, they had been subjected to extreme dehumanization, ethnic cleansing and an unfolding genocide.

54. Artificial intelligence and digital technology had also been weaponized against women and girls. In a recent report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/56/48](#)), she had discussed the direct link between the consumption of pornography and prostitution on one hand and violence against women and girls on the other.

55. Equally concerning was the continued push in some countries to erase women-specific words from language and to erase the way in which being female impacted their lives and shaped their experiences of discrimination and violence. Policies and legislation must not continue to ignore the centrality of sex as a key factor in the discrimination of women and girls, and women must not be denied access to single-sex spaces where such spaces were proportionate, legitimate and necessary for women's safety and dignity.

56. Women and girls were mobilizing, organizing and speaking out to protect their rights, often at great personal risk. The sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2025 could provide a crucial opportunity for reform of the global architecture to combat violence against women and girls. The Commission should be made more operational and should be more connected to grass-roots women's

movements. In addition, States should recognize the value of adopting an optional dedicated protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on ending violence against women.

57. In her report ([A/79/325](#)), she had argued that violence against women and girls in sports was pervasive and systemic and driven by male-dominated cultures, harmful stereotypes and a lack of investment in women's sports. Moreover, the increased intrusion of male individuals in female-only sports further eroded the integrity and safety of women and girls. It was imperative that States, sporting bodies, the media and all other relevant actors take urgent action to uphold the protection of all women and girls in sports.

58. **Mr. Bigot** (France) said that gender equality was an essential condition for the development of peaceful and sustainable societies. In that regard, draft general recommendation No. 40, on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, issued by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, was a remarkable step forward that deserved support. The rights of women and girls throughout the world must be defended, and no crisis of any kind should ever be used to justify undermining those rights.

59. France, along with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, would be introducing a draft resolution in the Third Committee that was aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls in the digital space. In that regard, his delegation wished to know how the experts' work addressed the issue of violence against women in the digital environment.

60. **Ms. Eggli** (Switzerland) said that her delegation had noted with concern that political, health, economic, environmental and humanitarian crises continued to have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. In 2024, which marked the forty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the number of violations and abuses of the human rights of women and girls worldwide had been dramatic. The work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was therefore more necessary than ever.

61. She asked all the experts to share their views on what States could do to strengthen the equal and inclusive representation of women in parliaments.

62. **Ms. Gregoire-van Haaren** (Kingdom of the Netherlands) said that women and girls in all their diversity, including LGBTQI+ persons, had a right to participate in sports, free from discrimination and violence. Her delegation was concerned by the abuse that women and girls faced because of their sporting endeavours, including online. Women and girls who did not meet the physical stereotype of a woman were often degradingly referred to as "she-male" or "men masquerading as women". To address toxic masculinity, it was crucial for men and boys to interact with women and girls as their peers and equals.

63. She asked the Special Rapporteur how the exclusion of women from non-segregated sporting events played a role in the maintenance of gender stereotypes.

64. **Mr. Lang** (United States of America) said that the Special Rapporteur had appropriately noted in her report ([A/79/325](#)) that all persons, irrespective of their gender identity, were entitled to live a life free from discrimination. However, in that same report, she had erroneously conflated transgender persons with intersex persons or others with naturally occurring variations in sex characteristics, and had used demeaning language to refer to transgender persons. Furthermore, his delegation shared her concern that women and girls were disproportionately subjected to hostile threats and harassment in virtual spaces. It had therefore been dismayed to see her engage in similar behaviour during the Olympics, spreading false and harmful information about the gender of an Algerian boxer.

65. The United States took pride in its women athletes who had stood for equality and safety in sports by speaking out about issues such as abuse at the hands of their team doctor and by fighting for equal pay for women athletes.

66. **Mr. Kuzevich** (Russian Federation) said that work was currently under way in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to adopt draft general recommendation No. 40, on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, and draft general recommendation No. 41, on gender stereotypes. In that context, his delegation once again called on the members of the Committee to strictly adhere to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to carry out their functions in accordance with paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, which provided that the activities of the treaty bodies should be carried out within their respective mandates and in a manner consistent with the provisions of the relevant treaties, thus not creating new obligations for States parties. The Russian Federation considered general recommendations to reflect the private opinions of the Committee's experts, which did not impose any additional obligations on States.

67. His delegation shared the Special Rapporteur's view that only women should participate in female sporting competitions. To allow otherwise would be a flagrant violation of the rights of female athletes, as transgender persons possessed physical advantages over women. The Russian Federation hoped that sports federations and officials would heed the Special Rapporteur's recommendations.

68. At the same time, his delegation regretted the attempts by the Special Rapporteur to impose on States the controversial concept of "sexual orientation and gender identity", which had not been agreed at the intergovernmental level. It also called on her to employ the term "violence against women" instead of "gender-based violence".

69. **Ms. Amorim Cardoso** (Brazil) said that the extent of the backlash against gender equality was disturbing. Brazil was concerned in particular about the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, enacted in Afghanistan by the Taliban in August 2024. Since the Taliban had taken power in 2021, Brazil had welcomed Afghan women judges as part of its national action plan for women and peace and security. Her Government promoted a domestic agenda of equal pay and redistribution of care work; combating gender-based violence, femicide and misogyny; and a gender perspective on climate justice.

70. The report of the Special Rapporteur failed to adequately assess the challenges, exclusion and violence faced by transgender women in various contexts, including sports. The Special Rapporteur must ensure that her voice as a United Nations expert did not inadvertently contribute to further discrimination against transgender women.

71. **Ms. Schmiedova** (Czechia) said that her delegation shared the concern of the Chair of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls that the backlash against the rights of women and girls had reached extreme proportions in some parts of the world. She asked what concrete measures were envisioned by the Working Group in connection with its recommendation that gender apartheid be considered a crime against humanity.

72. Czechia was committed to removing historical, social, cultural, religious and ideological barriers to gender equality to ensure a life of dignity for all. Respect for human rights and human dignity averted conflicts, prevented the emergence of international threats and promoted prosperity and sustainable development. Her Government was in the process of reviewing its national gender equality strategy for

the current decade and was drafting its third national action plan on women and peace and security.

73. **Ms. Guevarra-de Dios** (Philippines) said that her delegation wished to ask the Special Rapporteur what role international mechanisms could play in addressing the rise of online violence against women in sports. It also wished to know what strategies had proven effective in overcoming cultural norms that discouraged women and girls from participating in sports or from reporting abuse.

74. The Philippines had taken steps to address both online and offline violence against women in sports. The country's Magna Carta of Women guaranteed equal participation in sports and the elimination of gender-based discrimination, ensuring that women and girls had access to development programmes, scholarships and training. In addition, the Safe Spaces Act (2018) guaranteed equality, security and safety for both men and women in private and public spaces, online workplaces and educational institutions, and criminalized sexual harassment in public and online settings.

75. While such laws had strengthened the capacity of the Philippines to address violence against women, challenges, such as underfunding and persistent cultural norms, remained. By sharing strategies and best practices and adopting survivor-centred approaches, a safer, more inclusive environment could be created for women and girls in sports.

76. **Ms. Akita** (Japan) said that all people should be given a fair opportunity to participate in sport with a view to promoting an inclusive society whose members respected one another's human rights and dignity. The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls had pointed out that some countries faced obstacles when it came to the adoption of laws to advance gender equality. It had also noted that gaps existed with respect to the adoption and implementation of relevant public policies, in particular owing to a lack of funds.

77. She asked the Chair of the Working Group to share examples of national efforts to maintain or increase funding to promote gender equality, and the key factors that made them successful.

78. **Ms. Diaz Corona** (Mexico) said that her delegation considered the development by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of draft general recommendation No. 40, on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, to be of great importance. Mexico also welcomed a focus on feminist foreign policies, which were vital for achieving substantive equality. She asked how the Committee planned to collaborate with stakeholders and regional mechanisms to take advantage of Beijing+30 as a means of promoting gender equality.

79. Mexico agreed with the Special Rapporteur on the need for a comprehensive approach to violence against women and girls that was intersectional and covered the multiple dimensions of violence, while taking into account diversity among women.

80. She asked the Special Rapporteur what she believed to be the major challenges to guaranteeing safety in sports, especially for those who were sexually diverse. She also wished to know what States and sporting organizations could do to encourage women and girls to speak out against violence.

81. **Ms. Mudrenko** (Ukraine) said that the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine continued to take a devastating toll on Ukrainian women and girls. According to the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, since February 2022, the aggressor State had killed at least 3,283 women and 261 girls and had injured 5,345 women and 479 girls. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine had found

that, in 2023, girls and women aged 15 to 83 years had been victims of war crimes such as rape and sexual violence committed by the Russian occupying forces. Ukrainian prosecutors had documented 303 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, in which 189 victims were women and 15 victims were girls. The Russian occupying forces used sexual violence as a barbaric method of warfare with the aim of punishing civilians and prisoners of war.

82. The Russian invasion had also caused one of the largest displacement crises, affecting 19 million people, the majority of whom were women and children. Ukraine was grateful to those countries that had opened their homes and hearts to Ukrainians fleeing from Russian atrocities.

83. She asked the Special Rapporteur which Member States and international mechanisms could do better to ensure accountability for such crimes.

84. **Ms. Alanko** (United Kingdom) said that the report of the Special Rapporteur rightly highlighted that women and girls continued to face disproportionate barriers to their safe and equal participation in sport. The United Kingdom recognized the vital role played by sport in empowering women and girls by building confidence, enhancing leadership skills and promoting physical and mental well-being. It was therefore essential that States support the work of sporting bodies to combat gender stereotypes, violence and harassment. All persons deserved dignity and respect and to live without fear of violence and persecution, including those who were transgender or gender diverse. The United Kingdom would continue to stand alongside its partners to defend the human rights and freedoms of women and girls in all their diversity.

85. **Ms. Alexandridou** (Greece) asked the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women how the backlash against gender equality could affect States' implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She also wished to know how the Convention could safeguard the meaningful protection of women and girls, in all their diversity, from the regression in their rights.

86. **Ms. Nae** (Romania) asked the Special Rapporteur to provide more details on tactics or industry best practices that had been used to successfully gather the relevant data. She also wished to know what Member States could do to ensure that women and girls were adequately consulted in the formulation of sports policies, especially those that dealt with the issues of sex-segregated sports, violence prevention and access to leadership positions.

87. **Ms. Maillé** (Canada) said that redoubled efforts were needed globally to confront attacks on gender equality. Any discussions of violence against women and girls in sport must be inclusive of all women, including transgender women and girls, who experienced violence and discrimination based on their gender identity and expression. In that regard, Canada had supported the development of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, which defined prohibited behaviours, including psychological, physical and sexual mistreatment, and advanced a respectful sport culture. Her Government also funded an independent complaint mechanism to administer the Code.

88. She asked the Special Rapporteur how dialogue could be advanced among Member States that had differing views regarding how to reconcile safety, fairness and inclusion in sport and respect for human rights.

89. **Ms. Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that the unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States had a negative social and economic impact. Cuba continued to take steps to completely eradicate violence and discrimination against women and girls. A national programme for the advancement

of women had been adopted in 2021, and a comprehensive strategy for preventing and addressing gender-based violence and domestic violence had also been approved. In June 2023, an observatory on gender equality had been launched to gather data and carry out comprehensive analyses regarding women's empowerment. Those initiatives were in addition to the extensive guarantees of the rights of women and girls contained in the Constitution and the Family Code.

90. Her delegation wished to hear the Special Rapporteur's views on the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of sport.

91. **Ms. Zulkifli** (Malaysia) said that her country had made significant strides in advancing gender equality and safeguarding the human rights of women and girls through policies to ensure equal access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities. The journey was far from complete, however. Communities, organizations and Governments must work together to dismantle the barriers that prevented women and girls from realizing their full potential. They must create a world in which women and girls could thrive, free from violence, discrimination and inequality.

92. Her delegation wished to know how the erosion of safe spaces for women and girls, both in law and in practice, could contribute to violence, discrimination and other human rights violations.

93. **Ms. Toschi** (Luxembourg) said that the issue of gender-based violence in sports did not receive enough attention. Too often, women and girls in all their diversity faced discrimination and violence, which prevented them from participating in sports and from realizing their human rights. Accordingly, Luxembourg welcomed the fact that during the current session of the General Assembly, two resolutions on the right to participate in sports would be presented to the Third Committee.

94. She asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on her consultations with civil society and to share whether she had received contributions from civil society organizations that she had chosen not to include in her report.

95. **Ms. Konneh** (Liberia) said that the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection of Liberia had made progress towards the advancement of women and girls, in particular in sports. Her Government had made significant progress in ensuring that gender-responsive budgeting and planning was upheld at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. Liberia had developed a national plan for women and peace and security that supported the safety, physical and mental health, empowerment and participation of women and girls at all levels of society. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, in cooperation with civil society organizations, advocated for women and girls' advancement.

96. Her Government had taken undertaken comprehensive analyses to ensure the effectiveness of its gender-responsiveness policies and programmes. It had created gender units to promote women's rights and encouraged women's political participation and leadership. It also combated discrimination and stereotypes and adopted laws that mainstreamed gender priorities at both the national and subnational levels.

97. **Ms. Broderick** (Ireland) said that women and girls in all their diversity should be able to make free decisions about their bodies and about how, when and if to have children, and they should also have access to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. In addition, women and girls should not face discrimination or exclusion based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. States were therefore urged to provide women and girls with equitable access to affordable, appropriate and high-quality health services.

98. She asked the Chair of the Working Group how men and boys could be engaged as allies in countering the backlash against gender equality.

99. **Mr. Bauwens** (Belgium) said that a rise in authoritarianism and the emergence of multiple crises were disproportionately affecting women's rights worldwide. No tradition, religion, political ideology or cultural custom could ever justify gender discrimination or the denial of the rights of women and girls in all their diversity. The international community must step up its joint efforts to achieve gender equality by bringing about the necessary social transformation. The current year marked the tenth anniversary of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which had strengthened support services and the training of professionals.

100. Gender-based violence required a holistic approach in all domains, including sports. While the controversial topic of sexual orientation and gender identity in the context of sports merited attention, his delegation stressed the importance of not falling into the trap of pitting the human rights of one group against another. It should be possible to raise legitimate concerns while addressing stereotypes and transphobia.

101. He asked the Chair of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls to elaborate on how States, in collaboration with civil society, could counter politically motivated rollbacks of women's rights. He was also interested to know what concrete actions could be taken to strengthen social movements working towards just societies.

102. **Ms. Mangalanandan** (India) said that her delegation took strong exception to the reference to her country in the report of the Special Rapporteur. India had a zero-tolerance approach to sexual abuse and misconduct and had implemented strong legal frameworks to protect women and girls, including athletes, from such violations. The stringent provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (2013) ensured that any form of harassment or abuse was reported, investigated and prosecuted, including in sports institutions. The Wrestling Federation of India had implemented significant reforms to enhance transparency and accountability, reflecting its commitment to athlete protection. An independent oversight committee and internal complaints mechanism had been established to ensure the swift and impartial handling of concerns, in particular those related to sexual harassment. In addition, mandatory gender sensitization training for officials and athletes strengthened efforts to create a safer and more inclusive environment in Indian sports.

103. **Mr. Denis** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that his delegation wished to draw attention to the situation in Afghanistan, where women and girls were being systematically deprived their fundamental rights. The European Union urged the Taliban to immediately remove all discriminatory policies and legislation directed against women and girls.

104. He asked the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women what priority actions States should implement to achieve gender equality. He also asked the Chair of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls to elaborate on how inclusivity, sexual and reproductive health and education could benefit families and promote gender equality.

105. Despite significant progress when it came to women's and girls' participation in sports, that sector remained one of the most gender-unequal social institutions in modern society. Sexual and gender-based violence, in particular in coach-athlete relationships, remained rampant. He asked the Special Rapporteur what specific measures international sports organizations could take to increase women's representation in leadership roles.

106. **Ms. Ponikvar Velázquez** (Slovenia) said that, in early 2023, a survey had been conducted in her country on the various types of abuse experienced by girl athletes. The survey showed that 26 per cent had experienced physical abuse, 21 per cent emotional abuse, 11 per cent sexual abuse and 28 per cent neglect. It was essential that policies and measures be formulated to prevent violence, ensure the protection of women and girls in sports and provide support services to victims or survivors.

107. She asked whether the Special Rapporteur thought there was a need to promote public debate in order to formulate comprehensive responses to violence against women and girls in sports and to raise awareness among female athletes about their rights.

108. **Ms. Demosthenous** (Cyprus) said that many women and girls in sports faced gender-based discrimination, exclusion and violence, including psychological and economic violence. States must adopt legislation and national policies regarding gender equality in sports and address the structural barriers that prohibited the equal and effective participation of women and girls in sports. In 2023, the parliament of Cyprus had amended the law to eliminate any form of gender inequality in benefits for athletes on national teams. Men and women on national teams received the same daily allowance, travel compensation, remuneration for matches and expenses for clothing, footwear and food. In addition, the Cyprus Sports Organization was responsible for ensuring and promoting gender equality in sports under the amended legislation.

109. She asked the Special Rapporteur to share her views on how the media could contribute to breaking the cycle of discrimination and violence and promoting the equal and fair representation of women and girls in sports.

110. **Ms. Durodola** (Nigeria) said that her delegation commended the exceptional courage of the Special Rapporteur in enlightening the Committee on the misuse of the so-called progressive agenda to mask regression and further engender violence against women and girls. Nigeria fully shared her deep concerns about trafficking, prostitution, pornography and the normalization of modern slavery and gross violence against women and girls. It also supported her call for the United Nations to act to eradicate prostitution, trafficking in persons and pornography.

111. The Special Rapporteur had noted in her report on prostitution and violence against women and girls ([A/HRC/56/48](#)) that women and girls and girl migrants, among other vulnerable groups, were the most affected by prostitution. Nigeria asked her what role the International Organization for Migration and other relevant global, regional and national migration bodies should play in ensuring the elimination of prostitution. Furthermore, her delegation wished to know whether she thought there was any way in which prostitution, sex work or pornography could be dignifying to any woman or girl.

112. **Ms. Mimran Rosenberg** (Israel) said that her delegation welcomed the thematic focus of the Special Rapporteur's report ([A/79/325](#)) and reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to ensuring the full, equal and safe participation of all women and girls in sports. Israel strongly condemned all forms of gender-based and sex-based violence, including sexual harassment, and was proud to be a safe and inclusive home for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, including those who participated in sports. Her delegation was therefore deeply concerned that the report promoted harmful narratives against transgender women, an already vulnerable group. Moreover, the report strayed from its theme to unjustly target Israel while making baseless allegations against it in the context of its war against Hamas.

113. Furthermore, the report misrepresented a decision made by the International Court of Justice, containing a reference to a statement that was not found in any

official Court documentation. Israel was disappointed that the Special Rapporteur was using her important mandate for political purposes.

114. Her delegation wished to know why the Special Rapporteur had not spoken out to call for the release of the hostages, including women, being held by the Hamas terror organization.

115. **Ms. Wolfe** (Observer for the Holy See) said that any failures to recognize the equal dignity of women, in law or in practice, were deeply troubling. It was vital that women and girls live in safety and enjoy equal access to education and employment. Women must be respected and cherished for their unique gifts and capacities. In that regard, the Holy See was concerned that so much of the discussion had been focused on the promotion of policies and programmes that treated those very gifts and capacities as a liability and denied the embodied reality of womanhood.

116. The Holy See was interested to know if the Special Rapporteur had considered whether there might be a link between the erasure or denial of sexual difference in areas such as sports and the increasing toleration of forms of exploitation that relied on those very differences, including prostitution, pornography and surrogacy.

117. **Ms. Orduz Duran** (Colombia) said that her Government continued to prioritize efforts to provide care to victims and survivors of sexual violence in armed conflicts and the fight against impunity. Her delegation agreed with the Special Rapporteur regarding the catalytic effect of sport in improving the living conditions of women and contributing to more just and peaceful societies. Colombia was committed to defending the human rights of all people, including women, adolescents and girls in all their diversity. Colombia was concerned by the lack of precision in the language used by the Special Rapporteur, as it reproduced and reinforced gender stereotypes that were at the root of the violence and the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination to which women were subjected. Care should be taken not to reproduce those discriminatory ways of thinking. Feminism belonged to all women.

118. **Mr. Borlone Díaz** (Chile) said that his delegation was concerned about inappropriate references in the report of the Special Rapporteur, such as the phrase “males who identify as women”. As a country committed to protecting and safeguarding the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people, Chile considered it essential that transgender women be recognized as women, while understanding that there might be legitimate debate about how to guarantee fair and safe competition in sports that allowed their participation.

119. The report of the Special Rapporteur was valuable in drawing attention to topics such as the prevalence of sexual and economic violence in sport and the exclusion and discrimination suffered by women and girls in sport. For that reason, Chile had submitted contributions to the report that had highlighted the importance of punishing such violence and combating stereotypes about women and girls in sport.

120. **Ms. von Ernst** (Iceland) said that her delegation agreed with the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the importance of the meaningful participation of women in peace processes and of the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). By the end of the year, Iceland would adopt its fourth national action plan on the implementation of that resolution for the period 2024-2030, which had three priority areas: advocacy and knowledge-building at the international level; protection of women and girls in conflict zones; and the implementation of gender perspectives in the work of civil institutions.

121. Women and girls in all their diversity, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer women, had the right to participate fully and equally in all areas of sports and to be paid equally to men in sports. To mark International

Equal Pay Day on 18 September, Iceland, together with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, had hosted an event on pay equity in sports.

122. She asked the Special Rapporteur to share best practices on ensuring accountability for violations and discrimination against women and girls, in all their diversity, in sports, as well as concrete measures that States could take to accelerate equal pay for women and girls in all areas of sports.

123. **Ms. Rizk** (Egypt) said that her delegation supported the findings and recommendations contained in the Special Rapporteur's report. The erosion of safe spaces for women, including in sports, was directly linked to the backlash against women's rights. However, Egypt did not recognize the terms "economic violence", which was defined as the infliction of economic harm on women athletes, or "rights of transgender persons". Her delegation emphasized that human rights were universal and indivisible and should be enjoyed and exercised without discrimination, including on the basis of sex. It noted the arguments of the Special Rapporteur regarding countries that had jeopardized the safety of women and the integrity of sports by allowing mixed-sex sporting competitions.

124. It would be remiss for her delegation not to highlight the most atrocious form of violence against women and girls: the indiscriminate aggression by Israel against civilians in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, the majority of whom were women and girls. That was in addition to the systemic Israeli violation of Palestinian women's rights and the violence, including sexual violence, perpetrated against female Palestinians under occupation, especially in places where they were arbitrarily detained.

125. **Ms. Zhang** Sisi (China) said that her country had had frank and fruitful dialogues with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the ninth periodic report of China on its implementation of the Convention. China had adopted over 100 laws and regulations that protected women's rights, most notably the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests. It continued to implement a national action plan to foster women's equal participation in economic and social development and to safeguard their legitimate rights and interests in the spheres of health, education, employment, social security, marriage and the family. Her delegation would give serious consideration to the constructive suggestions put forward by the Committee in its concluding observations and would continue to promote the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, eliminate all forms of prejudice and discrimination against women and make women's equality a genuine behavioural standard in society.

126. **Mr. Passmoor** (South Africa) said that his delegation appreciated the important work being undertaken on gender self-identification and hoped that those efforts would create pathways for constructive engagement in addressing discrimination and the protection of the inherent and universal human rights of all people, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. He asked the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women who determined the topics and themes for engagement with other mandate holders such as the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls.

127. The report of the Special Rapporteur exposed a toxic culture in sport that created fertile ground for violence against women and girls. South Africa was apprehensive about the potential for sexual predators to operate undetected in sports and recognized the culture within sport that perpetuated gender inequality and the objectification of women athletes. However, the issue of transgender athletes and athletes with differences in sexual development was discussed through the lens of fairness in sport, and its connection to violence against women and girls remained unclear. The topic

of transgender athletes was given disproportionate attention and distracted from the other real issues highlighted. In addition, the tone of the treatment of the topic did not promote beneficial engagement or understanding, which was necessary with polarizing social issues. South Africa was also concerned that the commentary and recommendations ran counter to Human Rights Council resolution 40/5, which discouraged the use of unnecessary, humiliating and harmful medical procedures as a condition of participation in sports, and resolution 55/14, on combating discrimination, violence and harmful practices against intersex persons.

128. **Mr. Tammsaar** (Estonia), speaking on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden), said that those countries strongly condemned all forms of violence against all women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. They remained deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation of women and girls globally, including LGBTIQ+ persons, as a result of wars, armed conflicts, climate change and other factors.

129. As committed members of the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, their countries underlined the critical importance of involving men and boys in the achievement of gender equality and in countering violence against women and girls. He asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on best practices for involving men and boys in such efforts.

130. **Ms. Messaoud** (Algeria) said that the report of the Special Rapporteur contained an implication that an Algerian athlete, Imane Khelif, the winner of the gold medal in boxing at the Paris Olympics, was not a woman. She had in fact been born female and had lived her life as female, and the International Olympic Committee itself had clearly confirmed that the allegation about her was devoid of truth. The vicious campaign waged against Khelif, a proud representative of Algerian women, was a clear illustration of discrimination against women in the field of sports. Accordingly, Algeria called for increased efforts to eliminate violence and discrimination against women in all fields, in particular in sports.

131. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the term “gender apartheid”, which was used in the report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, undermined the internationally recognized understanding of apartheid as white supremacy and racial segregation. The addition of a gender dimension to the term could lead to further polarization in discussions of apartheid. The term could, however, be used in reference to the brutal and systematic atrocities committed by the Israeli regime against women and girls in Palestine, as Israeli laws, policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories amounted to apartheid and, when applied to Palestinian women and girls, therefore amounted to gender apartheid.

132. Her delegation shared the view of the Special Rapporteur that sport empowered women and girls, enhanced their self-confidence and physical and mental well-being and unlocked their full potential, leading to healthier and more resilient societies. The Islamic Republic of Iran also agreed that the integrity of female sports must be protected. The provision of female-only spaces such as showers and locker rooms was necessary to ensure an inclusive and safe environment for all women and girls in sports.

133. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), speaking via video link, said that paragraph 1 of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women clearly provided that the Committee had a mandate to make general recommendations based on the examination of the reports and information received from the States parties. That was what the Committee had been doing for over 45 years. Draft general

recommendation No. 40, on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, would be fundamental for progress on the equal and effective participation of women in parliaments.

134. Regarding collaboration between the Committee and regional mechanisms, she believed that the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms was a good example of cooperation between the Committee and regional organizations, such as the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention and the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

135. Clear guidance regarding online violence against women and girls could be found in the Committee's general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19.

136. With respect to addressing the general backlash against women's rights, one recommendation would be to ensure that the Committee had sufficient resources to fulfil its mandate. There had been interruptions in the work of the Committee, not only because of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, but also because of the liquidity crisis facing the United Nations. In addition, the Committee should be strengthened as the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

137. Violence against women, trafficking, sexual and reproductive health and rights and effective access to justice were all fundamental issues. The prosecution of all violations of the human rights of women and girls was essential and required the equal and inclusive participation of women in all decision-making systems. She appreciated the recognition by States that the Convention was a fundamental legislative framework, and hoped that it would achieve universal ratification.

138. **Ms. Nyirinkindi** (Chair of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls) said that the Working Group had issued a guidance document in 2024 containing a proposal that the term "gender apartheid" be included under article 2 of the draft articles on prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity. According to research and the opinions of legal experts, gender apartheid led to the same outcomes as racial and ethnic apartheid, namely, discrimination, oppression and domination. The Working Group's proposal, accordingly, was to adapt the definition of "apartheid" found in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

139. The issue of artificial intelligence and gender would be the topic of further research and a guidance document. It was important to pursue a gender-responsive approach to the design, implementation and monitoring of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence. The Working Group would also examine the need to ensure inclusive and accessible technologies for women and girls and the need to develop educational programmes that increased their participation in technological fields.

140. The Working Group had issued a guidance document on the issue of men's accountability for gender equality. It reiterated the need for such accountability at the personal, institutional and community levels, and had called on men to identify how concepts of masculinity and gender and social constructs affected their own privilege and the rights of women and girls.

141. The Working Group had documented good practices with respect to gender-responsive budgeting. Some Member States had developed laws, policies or tools on gender-responsive budgeting, some even with parliamentary supervision, with committees exercising oversight of executive implementation of gender-responsive indicators. Civil society participation in that process was also a good practice that the Working Group had highlighted in its 2023 report on the gendered inequalities of

poverty ([A/HRC/53/39](#)). Progress was not always linear, however, and resource constraints had made it difficult for a number of countries to sustain that practice.

142. The Working Group had noted some good practices followed by Member States to modify social and cultural patterns that contributed to discrimination against women. Awareness programmes were also helpful. While the Working Group had noticed that the use of quotas in some countries had resulted in increased numbers of women in public office, that was usually confined to legislatures, as opposed to executive or judicial bodies.

143. With respect to addressing the backlash against women's rights, the Working Group had highlighted the need to rely on the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that called on Member States to modify cultural and social patterns that rested on a belief in the inferiority or superiority of one gender over another. That could be done through awareness-raising and legislative backstopping.

144. Lastly, it was critical to counter misinformation and harmful narratives that undermined human rights by providing accurate information and fostering dialogue.

145. **Ms. Alsalem** (Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences) said that she had welcomed input for her report from diverse actors and had included persons and organizations with divergent views in her consultations so that they could discuss their areas of disagreement. She had personally read and reflected on all submissions and had taken them into consideration in her analysis, which was firmly rooted in human rights law.

146. In her report on prostitution and violence against women and girls ([A/HRC/56/48](#)), she had made several recommendations about how to deal with pornography as a form of digitally facilitated violence. States' measures in that regard should not rely exclusively on voluntary action by the platforms and businesses that provided digitally facilitated pornography.

147. She had recommended that, to increase the participation of women and girls in sports, investments should be made at all levels. She had also recommended combating impunity for acts of violence by helping sports associations to encourage reporting and to provide better assistance and protection to victims, which included disseminating clear protocols for reporting. Sports associations could conduct background checks on coaches and prohibit predatory coaches from moving between teams.

148. While she had not specifically addressed the issue of unilateral coercive measures mentioned by Cuba, she had recommended investment in the development of safe and accessible cities and sports facilities that responded to the specific needs of women and girls. To the extent that sanctions prevented such measures, they clearly hampered the enjoyment by all of sport.

149. As the representative of the United States knew, her report reflected the concern that she had expressed to his Government regarding its inclusion of gender identity within the category of sex in its regulations for the implementation of Title IX, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in education programmes. She did not believe that the phrase "males who identify as women" was demeaning, as it was factually correct. The language and principles of human rights must be consistent with science and facts, including biological facts. Multiple studies showed that athletes born male possessed performance advantages in sports throughout their lives. In her report, she had advocated for the inclusive participation of everyone, irrespective of how they identified. At the same time, non-discrimination based on sex was recognized in all major international human rights agreements. Sex must be understood in its ordinary sense of biological sex.

150. It was not uncommon in human rights law for there to be tension between rights. The duty of experts was to resolve that tension in order to minimize harm. That was what she had done in calling for female-only sports categories to be retained and for open categories to be created for those who wished to participate irrespective of how they identified. What had happened at the Paris Olympics with respect to the Algerian boxer could have been avoided if the inclusion guidelines of the International Olympic Committee had stated that there should be no discrimination based on sex, instead of stating that there should be no discrimination based on “gender and sex variations”.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.
