



# General Assembly

Sixty-second session

**69**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting

Wednesday, 12 December 2007, 10 a.m.  
New York

*Official Records*

*President:* Mr. Kerim . . . . . (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

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

## **Tribute to the victims of the bombings in Algeria**

**The President:** I should like to convey to the Government and people of Algeria the General Assembly's profound sorrow at the tragic events that targeted United Nations premises in Algiers yesterday. Our deepest sympathy and condolences are also extended to the families of the United Nations staff members who were killed or wounded as a result of the bomb attack.

I invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

*The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.*

**The President:** The Assembly will hear a message by video by the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who is currently in Bali, Indonesia.

**The Secretary-General:** It is close to midnight here in Bali, but I feel compelled to most urgently address the General Assembly in the wake of the terrorist attack on the United Nations offices in Algiers.

Words cannot express my sense of shock and outrage. This was a despicable strike against individuals serving humanity's highest ideals under the United Nations banner. One head of Government speaking today in Bali said it well: those serving the United Nations serve us all, and so this was an attack on all of us.

We are still counting the dead, tending to the wounded and looking for the missing, not only from our own United Nations staff, but also innocent Algerians. My heart goes out to the victims. Their sacrifice cannot and shall not be forgotten.

I spoke to President Bouteflika this evening to express my deepest condolences to the people of Algeria and to the families of the victims. I asked the President to take all necessary measures to ensure the security of United Nations personnel.

I have also asked the United Nations Development Programme Administrator, Mr. Kemal Dervis, and other senior officials to proceed to Algiers immediately. They will determine how best to aid those injured in the attack and their families. The security and welfare of United Nations staff is paramount. We will take every measure to ensure their safety in Algeria and elsewhere, beginning with an immediate review of our security precautions and policies.

We all remember the attack of 19 August 2003 against United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. It claimed the lives of some of our best and brightest, among them Sergio Vieira de Mello and many Iraqis. We have taken many measures since then to enhance the security of our staff and premises around the world.

Meanwhile, our brave men and women continue their difficult and dangerous work. Our mission has been and will always be to help those most in need. The Baghdad attack will not deter us. Neither will this most recent attack. Our colleagues in Algiers would ask no less.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



In Algiers, we have today one more ugly reminder that terrorism remains the scourge of our times. The international community must be resolute in opposing those who prey on the innocent and vulnerable and those, like the United Nations, that seek only to help them. As Secretary-General, I wish to assure members of this body that I will continue to work with them in meeting that ever-present danger.

Let us salute our brave men and women. Let us know that this attack on the United Nations is an attack on us all and our highest ideals. I call on this General Assembly to stand united. We must all condemn this deed, just as we must work together to bring its vile perpetrators to justice.

**Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting  
Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the  
Special Session on Children**

**Agenda item 66 (continued)**

**Promotion and protection of the rights of children**

**(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session  
on children**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/259)**

**Draft resolution (A/62/L.31)**

**The President:** I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Carmen Alicia Maldonado De Wennier, Secretary for Social Welfare of Guatemala.

**Ms. De Wennier (Guatemala) (spoke in Spanish):** The delegation of Guatemala is honoured to address this High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, at which our common goal is to ensure the higher interests of children and to address the vicissitudes we must all endure in preparing a better world for them.

We thank the Secretary-General for having prepared the report on progress achieved. All such progress is of the highest value. Every country has striven to achieve results and has prepared plans and programmes based on its own cultural wealth, according pride of place to boys and girls alike.

Guatemala is a young country and, like all in our situation, has its own problems with a population more than 50 per cent of which is comprised of children and young people under 25 years of age, roughly 5 million of whom are under 5. That group is our human capital

and efforts are therefore now beginning to focus on the comprehensive development of those children.

In compliance with commitments made in the Plan of Action to generate conditions conducive to providing children and young people with a world in which they can develop in dignity, we have launched a number of measures that we deem to represent progress in various spheres and which we share with the General Assembly today.

The Ministry of Education has achieved near complete coverage in primary schooling. We have achieved 97 per cent this year, and hope to include the remaining 3 per cent next year with formal, semi-formal and remote education programmes. Working within the President's Secretariat for Social Well-being, the national agency that identifies, coordinates and supervises preventive and family and community enhancement efforts, as well as the rehabilitation and resocialization of adolescents facing criminal prosecution, we provide programmes that offer alternatives to incarceration, including monitored freedom and community services.

Actions undertaken focus on the individual as a complete human being — head, heart and body. We cannot envisage a future managed by a generation that is unable to think, feel and act. We start from the premise that we must listen to what the hearts of our children are telling us. We have to cure not only physical but spiritual hunger as well.

We are dealing in all our programmes with children with various physical and mental disabilities. In a common effort of the Government, civil society organizations devoted to children, and international organizations, in 2003 we approved and implemented a law on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents based on the best interests of children. On that basis, as of 2004 we launched a public policy for the protection of children and youth and a plan of action that entail obligations both for Government institutions and civil society organizations. In the context of that plan, programmes have been successfully developed, including one entitled "Growing Up Healthy in the Home", led by the First Lady's office of public works. National coverage reaches the most distant and vulnerable regions of the country, where the largest number of indigenous and poor populations are concentrated.

Those programmes enlist mothers as managers of development in educational processes, maternal care, health care and child nutrition. The campaign against HIV/AIDS, particularly vertical mother-to-child transmission, is of particular concern to the State. We have formulated and implemented a strategic national plan to reduce HIV/AIDS. Guatemala, vulnerable to natural phenomena as a result of severe weather, has prepared and implemented, in concert with UNICEF and State institutions, a handbook on how to care for abandoned children, children without adult care and children at risk.

Caring for those who continue to suffer from one terrible evil affecting our young people and children is also an issue of major concern. Among the specific actions we have taken to prosecute those who traffic in children, we have established for the first time an office within our prosecutorial agency, the Guatemalan Public Ministry, to address those perpetrators and the phenomenon of irregular adoptions. A strategic plan has been launched to implement national policies to combat trafficking in persons.

We have made the issue of adoption a priority over the past four years. In that regard, my country has ratified its accession to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, which will enter into force in Guatemala on 31 December. On Monday, the children's parliament symbolically debated and adopted a law in line with The Hague Convention; that law was adopted by our Congress yesterday. The voices of the children who speak to the conscience of adults has finally been heard.

On 14 January, there will be a change of Government, and UNICEF has suggested a road map for the new authorities. Guatemala needs continuity in its programmes to attain the Millennium Development Goals. We have learned from the experiences of such brotherly countries as Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Israel, Mexico and Peru, which have advised us with regard to many of our programmes. We have in common an unfinished task; our work has only just begun.

We are committed to achieving a world fit for children. Guatemala supports the declaration to be adopted at the end of this Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting. If we seek to achieve our goals, let us follow the light and not lose our way. Let us hear the clamour of the innocent hearts of our children and

work with the maturity and, above all, the resolve of adults. Working together, we will achieve those goals.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Idália Moniz, Secretary of State Assistant to the Minister and for Rehabilitation, and Ms. Rita Sobral, youth delegate of Portugal, on behalf of the European Union.

**Ms. Moniz (Portugal):** I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

The EU presidency strongly condemns the terrorist attacks on 11 December in Algiers, which killed a large number of people and wounded dozens more. The EU presidency conveys its deepest sympathy, condolences and solidarity to the families of the victims.

In the interests of time, I will not read my statement in its entirety, but the full version is being distributed in the Hall.

Five years ago, two young representatives addressed the special session on children with a message called "A world fit for us", prepared by over 400 children from about 100 countries who attended the Youth Forum. They said they wanted a world fit for them because a world fit for children is a world fit for all. They also said that, in that world fit for them, they envisaged respect for the rights of the child — Governments and adults having a real and effective commitment to applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child to all children.

Half a decade later, we are again gathered here to take stock not only of the progress the world has made in ensuring the implementation of the outcome document of the 2002 special session, but also of the difficulties that we face in achieving that aim. This is also an excellent occasion to boost synergies between all those involved with a view to identifying ways to ensure the full implementation of "A world fit for children".

Have we been able to fulfil the vision the child representatives dreamed of five years ago? How can we ensure more and quicker progress in realizing the rights of the child? What are the achievements that we

can be proud of and will serve us as an inspiration for future action? In which areas can and must we show more commitment and better results? What have we done for children?

We have, fortunately, many reasons to celebrate progress in the realization of children's rights and in the fulfilment of many of the promises we made in 2002. The Secretary-General's report on progress towards the goals of "A world fit for children" demonstrates the progress made in many areas, such as reducing child and maternal mortality and malnutrition. In fact, in 2006, for the first time in the modern era, the number of children dying before their fifth birthday fell below 10 million. We have also made progress in ensuring universal primary education for girls and boys, protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS. The world is also close to eradicating polio and is making rapid progress on measles.

States have also demonstrated commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention, the eighteenth anniversary of which we recently celebrated, is the most universal human rights treaty. It created a new vision of the child as an individual who requires distinct attention and is neither the property of its parents nor the helpless object of charity. The Convention has played a major role and acted as an inspiration at the domestic, regional and international levels; its message has therefore been reflected in many constitutions or children's rights codes, and it has also encouraged a rapid rise in the number of independent national institutions for children's rights, such as children's ombudsman offices and commissioners for children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has also, over the past five years, been a source of inspiration for EU member States. The EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights explicitly recognizes children's rights and reaffirms the obligations to act in the best interest of children and to take their views into account. Several provisions of the EU's Lisbon Reform Treaty, which will be signed later this week, refer to the rights of the child. Most significantly, it says in article 3, which deals with the aims of the European Union, that the EU shall protect the rights of the child. Also, in its relations with the wider world, the Treaty stipulates that the Union shall, inter alia, contribute to the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child.

Also in Europe, in the framework of the Council of Europe, we adopted in 2003 the Convention on Contact concerning Children, which was greatly influenced by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and which sets out rules concerning children's need for contact not only with both parents when the child is separated from one or both of them, but also with certain other persons having family ties with children. In 2007 we adopted, also in the framework of the Council of Europe, the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, which establishes various forms of sexual abuse of children as criminal offences, outlines preventive measures and establishes programmes to support victims. In 2006, the Council of Europe began a three-year programme, "Building a Europe for and with Children". The main objective of the programme is to help all decisions-makers and planners concerned to design and implement national strategies for the protection of children's rights and the prevention of violence against children.

The EU yesterday adopted a set of guidelines for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, which are a sign of our determination to observe as a matter of priority in our external human rights policy the promotion and protection of all rights of the child, taking into account the best interests of the child and its right to protection from discrimination and participation in decision-making processes, founded on the principles of democracy, equality, non-discrimination, peace and social justice, and the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights, including the right to development. To allow for focused action, the European Union has chosen all forms of violence against children as its first priority area and has adopted, together with guidelines, an implementation strategy for specific measures to be taken in that area.

A further cause for celebration is the adherence by United Nations Member States to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, each of which now has over 100 States parties. All EU member States have signed and almost all have ratified or acceded to both of them.

Furthermore, some two weeks ago, the General Assembly's Third Committee requested the Secretary-General to appoint Special Representative on Violence

against Children. The Special Representative will act as a high-profile and independent global advocate to promote the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children, ensuring the involvement of key actors concerned, including children. We are committed to collaborating with the new Special Representative to build a world free of violence for the children of the world.

It is nevertheless clear that by investing in children we lay the foundation for a world that cares and where passivity and indifference have no place. It is true that a lot remains to be done, but the normative and ethical framework of the Convention, together with the agenda for the decade agreed upon at the special session on children, as well as the results of this mid-decade review, are a strong foundation for the way forward. As the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa so eloquently put it: “Rocks in the path? I keep them all, one day I will build a castle”.

In their statement in 2002, child delegates highlighted the importance of ensuring their active, full and meaningful participation, and shared a vision of a world where children would be actively involved in decision-making at all levels and in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all matters affecting the rights of the child.

From our side, we know that the Convention led us to look at the child — at all children — differently. The special session back in 2002 reinforced that tendency, since children were able to express themselves and to participate — for the first time in United Nations history — as official delegates in these debates. Adults in Governmental and other delegations were faced with children’s views, opinions, criticism and also praise.

This year, we are replicating this experience. We know that at the national level children have increasingly been making their voices heard in their schools and communities, and even in national politics. We know that by enabling children to participate, we are contributing to building stronger children, and that stronger children will be able to build a better world. However, by having stronger children and by giving them the opportunity to speak out, we are also creating greater responsibilities for ourselves. Children are looking to us and will continue to do so. They will hold us accountable, and we cannot frustrate their expectations.

And now, I believe it is time to listen to our young people and, with your permission, Mr. President, I cede the floor to our youth delegate, Ms. Rita Sobral, born in the year of the World Summit for Children, and who will address this Assembly also on behalf of the 27 European Union member States.

**Ms. Sobral** (European Union): I was born in the year 1990. In that year, the World Summit for Children, here in this Hall, was a big step taken to give children a different place in international discussions and to push for progress in many aspects of our lives. Targets were set by world leaders, action was needed and the world was expecting results.

Twelve years later, when a special session devoted to us took place within the General Assembly, a group of 400 children and young people from all over the world also gathered here in New York to discuss important issues and to pass a message to adults by saying: “We can help — you must count on us to build a world fit for us”. For the first time in history, we had the opportunity to be heard at the United Nations. As former Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, “So far, adults have called the shots, but now it’s time to build the world with children”.

I am aware that a lot has been done so far. In 2006, for the first time in recent history, less than 10 million children under the age of 5 died, the gender gap in primary and secondary education was closing, and access to antiretroviral treatment that reduces the risk of transmission of HIV/AIDS increased.

However, millions of children are still victims of hunger, violence, discrimination, HIV/AIDS and all kinds of exploitation. Many girls my age, or even much younger than I, suffer immensely only because they were born girls. It is hard to believe and impossible to accept. As a young girl and citizen of the world, I do have hope and I do believe that a better future for us all is possible. But, as I stand here, I wonder what else I can do. Ten years ago, it would have been impossible for a 17-year-old like me to deliver a speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations. I have to confess it is a dream that has come true, and for that I am very grateful. But I also feel that I have the obligation to motivate my peers, showing them that, together, we can make a difference. We have something to add — our own ideas and our perspectives on issues that affect us and affect the world.

We are all in a learning process. Adults are starting to experience our participation in forums like this one. They are learning how to best take our views into consideration, but we also have our own homework to do in this regard. We, the children, have to engage more, participate more, care more and act more at the local, national and international levels, so that our voices are heard every day of the year — and not only on special occasions like this one. We want a world free of poverty and injustice. We want peace and tolerance and a protected environment. We want our rights to be protected and respected.

When I return to my community, family and school, I will tell them about what I heard here, as well as in the Youth Forum, and I want to give them hope and reassure them that adults are open to building a world with and for us all and to encourage them to participate. We must be aware of our role. We must not be ashamed to have a voice. We are the present, we are the future, and those gathered here today must keep up with the promise of hearing our views and respecting them. It will be worth it; I can promise that.

**The President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Moon Chang-jin, Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Moon Chang-jin** (Republic of Korea): At the outset, the Government of the Republic of Korea would like to express its deep condolences to the United Nations and the families of the victims who were sacrificed in the terrorist attack in Algeria, and we denounce all types of terrorism.

I wish to express my appreciation to the international community, in particular to the United Nations, UNICEF, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, other United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations and civil society, for their tireless efforts to realize the rights of children and to establish “A world fit for children”. My thanks also go to those children present here today who came from afar to add their voices to the international community’s endeavours to realize a world fit for children.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Republic of Korea has made numerous efforts to protect the rights of children and has developed a wide array of policies to implement the goals of “A world fit for children”. In 2002, the year the General Assembly’s special session on children was held, the Korean Government formulated

a comprehensive plan for child protection and development. Ever since, the protection of children’s rights and the monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child have become pillars of the child welfare policies of the Republic of Korea.

In 2003, a comprehensive plan for child safety was put in place to prevent child abuse, school violence and accidents involving children. My Government has also strengthened its policies on the protection of children from environmental harm and has enacted and revised laws and regulations to promote child safety. In 2005, my Government drew up a comprehensive plan for children and youth in poverty with the aim of tackling the problem of inherited poverty and providing all children with a chance to start life on an equal basis. Another initiative by the Republic of Korea is the Child Policy Coordinating Committee, which was set up in 2004 to harmonize various interministerial policies on children and to oversee the implementation of the Convention. Additionally, for regular monitoring of the implementation of the Convention, a child rights monitoring centre was established last year. All of these actions indicate the strong commitment of the Korean Government to the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Allow me to briefly share the efforts Korea has made in line with the four goals set forth in “A world fit for children”. First, to improve children’s health and to control HIV/AIDS infection among children and adolescents, the Korean Government has conducted physical examinations on schoolchildren on a regular basis in order to have sound data on child morbidity trends and to develop child health indicators. Health education, including information on HIV/AIDS, has been delivered to parents and teachers to help them better care for the health of their children. In addition, the Government has increased its spending on health benefits and support for children in need.

Secondly, the Government has increased its child education budget every year to provide children with quality education. This has resulted in a substantial expansion in child care and compulsory education. Also, to provide equal learning opportunities, the Government has invested in narrowing the education gap and increasing support for underprivileged children, not least of whom are children with disabilities.

Thirdly, the Korean Government is doing its utmost to protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence. There are 44 child protection centres in operation across the country. Child protection laws are in place and are strictly enforced. The Government has also set up a community-based support system to help children in crisis with needed services.

*Mr. Soborun (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Fourthly, the Korean Government, in cooperation with such international organizations as the World Health Organization and UNICEF, has also been providing assistance for the benefit of children around the world, including those in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in the form of pharmaceutical products, nutritional supplements, vaccines and distilled drinking water. It is also worth mentioning here the inter-Korean Summit that took place in October of this year and the inter-Korean Prime Ministers' talks in November. At these meetings the two Koreas agreed to develop and implement projects to improve nutrition and promote disease prevention for children in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Republic of Korea hopes that, through the activities and efforts it has undertaken and the plans it intends to pursue in the future, we can make a contribution to "A world fit for children". We will never tire in our efforts to realize a world in which all children are free from hunger, fear, exploitation and violence. We will rise to face any challenges in this effort and will do our best to promote collaboration and interaction with Member States in order to achieve our common goal for the happiness of children in the world.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pjer Šimunović, Assistant Minister of the Directorate for International Organizations of Croatia.

**Mr. Šimunović (Croatia):** First of all, I wish to express my Government's condolences to the Government and the people of Algeria, and to the United Nations staff members and their families, on their tragic loss. We join the Secretary-General in his words of shock, sadness and determination.

This five-year review of the General Assembly's special session on children provides us with an excellent opportunity to take stock of the important

progress the world has made in the realization of children's rights, but also of the challenges and shortcomings of our efforts. While aligning ourselves fully with the statement of the European Union presented by the Portuguese European Union presidency, and particularly with the statement delivered by the European Union youth delegate, we also wish to make some additional national remarks.

Croatia welcomes the Secretary-General's report containing the review of the achievements in the implementation of the document on "A world fit for children", for which Croatia has prepared and submitted a national Plus 5 report. The Secretary-General's report acknowledges that there has been notable progress since 2002. Deaths among children due to measles have been significantly reduced, while a sharp decline in the number of polio cases and a notable increase in primary school enrolment have been achieved. Unfortunately, the report also states that too many children still suffer from acts of violence, exploitation, poverty and insecurity.

We are pleased to note that in the past 18 years since the General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children's rights have been placed high on the agenda of the United Nations. States parties are therefore strongly obliged to effectively incorporate and implement its provisions in its national and international aspects, turning words into actions with the aim of creating a better world for children.

As a country that experienced the horrors of war in the 1990s, Croatia is a particularly motivated advocate of global efforts against the involvement of children in armed conflict. In that regard, we consider that the Paris Principles and Commitments on children associated with armed forces or armed groups represent a useful guide in our common efforts to respond to the plight of those children.

Allow me to underline the importance of the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee's recommendations have been widely disseminated and implemented as key guidelines of the national plan of activities for the rights and interests of children for the period 2006-2012. In September this year, Croatia presented to the Committee its initial report on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The

Committee has commended Croatia for ratifying all relevant instruments in the field, as well as for implementing the provision on training activities related to the Optional Protocol.

Following the Committee's recommendations, in 2003 Croatia established the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children in order to enhance the effective protection of children. The Ombudsperson, among other things, promotes the principle of the best interests of the child and advocates for the participation of children in matters of concern to them. The work of the Office has been acknowledged by other countries as a good example in the region.

Croatia welcomes the statements of the independent children's rights institutions and supports the further strengthening of those institutions to facilitate the work of promoting, protecting and monitoring progress in the realization of children's rights. As a member of the UNICEF Executive Board for the period 2007-2009, Croatia contributes to a range of UNICEF activities.

At the national level, the Government successfully cooperates with the UNICEF office in Croatia on special programmes aimed at protecting children from different forms of violence. The campaigns "Safe and Enabling Schools" and "Seven Steps to a Safe School", during which 115 schools were labelled as violence-free, have been recognized throughout the region as examples of original Croatian good practices. We are pleased to share our experience and knowledge with all interested countries and will continue to work on raising awareness and sensitizing the public on the issue of violence in schools, in particular the phenomenon of bullying.

We are particularly pleased by the fact that the Republic of Croatia is among those countries in which the corporal punishment of children — including degrading measures, mental or physical violence or abuse — is prohibited by law. Therefore, corporal punishment cannot be applied at home or in schools. It cannot be applied in the penal system as a sentence or a disciplinary measure or in alternative care settings. Additionally, parents must protect children from humiliating treatment and physical punishment by other persons.

Faced with the problem of many children who could not obtain their maintenance rights from parents who do not meet their obligations and with whom they

do not live, the Ombudsperson for Children and the Croatian Bar Association have concluded an agreement on the provision of pro bono legal aid. As a result, free legal aid is now offered to any child on whose behalf an individual claim for maintenance is being processed or on whose behalf increased maintenance or distress has been put forward, regardless of the material status or income of the parent living with the child.

Realizing the importance of quality education as a key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Croatia has developed a national educational standard, and the Government has decided to gradually introduce obligatory secondary education by providing a range of stimulatory measures.

Croatia welcomes the United Nations study on violence against children by Mr. Pinheiro, which provides an in-depth picture of the prevalence, nature and root causes of violence against children. We hope that the international community will find the political will to pursue its 12 overarching recommendations by taking appropriate action, including effective remedies and preventive and rehabilitative measures. In that regard, allow me to express our support for the establishment of a high-level mechanism that would promote the further implementation of those recommendations.

Croatia notes with appreciation the tenth anniversary of Graça Machel's groundbreaking report on the impact of armed conflict on children, which has galvanized significant action and contributed to the progress achieved in the protection of children, a strengthened international legal framework and, of particular importance, the first prosecutions of perpetrators by international tribunals.

The lesson we have learned in the past five years is that we must not lose our focus on children. The core issues are, as always, commitment and delivery. Without doubt, the failure to achieve the goals of "A world fit for children" would be a failure in our common aspirations to achieve the Millennium Declaration Goals by 2015. Let us not fail our children this time.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Victoriana Nchama Nsue, Secretary of State for International Cooperation and la Francophonie of Equatorial Guinea.

**Ms. Nchama Nsue** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me, like other speakers



before me, to express my heartfelt condolences to and solidarity with the people of Algeria on the attacks that have stricken its people.

It is a great honour for me to accept UNICEF's invitation to participate in this Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children. In Equatorial Guinea, we have recently concluded a series of evaluations of international cooperation activities in all spheres. UNICEF's work and flexibility in effectively adjusting to the new and dizzying changes experienced by my country deserve my Government's recognition. We are aware that UNICEF is working in very sensitive and delicate areas, since the main targets of its assistance are children and mothers. It therefore deserves support from us all.

When the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959, many of us were still children. Today, it is our task to take decisions that will affect humankind in the future. Thus, children are not only the future, but also the present. Long-term programmes must be based on the current situation of children. There is a saying of which my President, Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, is very fond and that sums up the current policy of my Government on the issue of children: "A wise people is better than a wealthy one". Only wisdom can create sustainable wealth and distribute it equitably and rationally. We are otherwise doomed to failure.

My Government has identified education as among the solid pillars on which to build the future of all societies. With education, we are able to understand any concept and any reality. Awareness programmes are becoming more effective with respect to such issues as the prevention of and campaign against HIV/AIDS, the rights of the child, democracy, tolerance, climate change and others. It is clear that without education, no matter how much we try, there is no way of making all these concepts and realities understood. Equatorial Guinea has carried out a process to enhance structures that deal with education, health and the rights of the child by enacting and implementing formal resolutions to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals.

With the support of UNICEF and other partners, we have been working to achieve solid results such as fighting malaria — as one of the main causes of infant mortality; a free programme for children and pregnant

mothers; a universal programme of totally free testing and medication for HIV/AIDS; a programme of eradication of onchocerciasis, also totally free of charge; an eradication programme for polio, also totally free of charge for the entire population; periodic inoculation campaigns for children and pregnant mothers; the building of preschool, primary and middle school centres throughout our nation; implementation of the special food security programme to ensure proper supply of foodstuffs and improve food for schoolchildren; and the creation of a fund for future generations, among many others.

*Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

We have involved civil society and non-governmental organizations in all these efforts. Here, I want to highlight the Committee to Support the Equatorial Guinean Children, chaired by our First Lady, Her Excellency Mrs. Constanca Mangué de Obiang. Her support has been extended to all areas affecting children in Equatorial Guinea: education, health care, provision of food and even evacuation abroad in case of grave illness.

Last November, the Government organized the second national economic conference to frame a new economic vision for the period until 2020. This new strategy, which will begin in 2008, will allocate to the social sector major resources to implement social projects for children, with the required support of agencies of the United Nations system as special partners working with my Government. With this approach, our Government's first priority in the new economic strategy is to focus efforts on the development of a future-oriented policy whose utmost expression is the child. My country's sensitivity regarding children's issues is not in doubt.

With a good education, awareness of all other crucial issues affecting the future of our planet and mankind, such as health, the environment, a culture of peace, et cetera, is easier. If we cannot ensure the comprehensive training of children in the present, to speak of the future or long-term plans is simply utopian.

We must all act together and strive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the outcome of which will be seen in 2015. By promoting a worldwide development partnership, we can comply with all those Goals: to eradicate extreme poverty, achieve universal

primary education, promote gender equality, reduce infant mortality, improve maternal health, fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensure a sustainable environment. All those objectives must be dealt with in an integrated fashion and simultaneously if we wish to achieve the desired impact. We know that by 2015 today's children will be young people and many of us will be old. Have we prepared our young people to shoulder the future of mankind with certainty?

The two proposed themes sum up the challenges that we must tackle to ensure a better life for our children: to ensure quality education and the protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and to promote a high quality of life by fighting HIV/AIDS.

I would like to say that I agree with the points made yesterday by the representative of Botswana, who said that culture or customs should not be used a pretext to perpetuate abuse of children and defenceless beings.

I wish to conclude by appealing for action and for the implementation of the policies that we have adopted. We believe that a great deal has already been written on the issue of children. What is missing now is practical action.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator of Canada.

**Ms. Andreychuk** (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I am grateful for this opportunity to address this Assembly. We are fortunate to have as part of our delegation two outstanding youth delegates, Ashley Teo and Joseph Singh, who have been extremely active over the last few days.

It is an honour for the Canadian delegation to be here today to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Plan of Action, "A world fit for children" (see resolution S-27/2, annex), at the 2002 special session on children. The time has come to reflect on what has been done, what we are now doing, and what we should do for young people around the world. How the international community responds to these challenges will determine how well its young citizens will be able to rise to their potential.

Canada recognizes the need to invest in its children and young people and continues to implement

policies that protect their health and well-being and help to address the challenges of tomorrow.

(*spoke in English*)

For example, Canada has developed its own national plan of action, "A Canada fit for children". The plan is the product of extensive consultation, including discussion with Canadian children and youth. It reflects a consensus across Canadian society that children's health and well-being is not only an inherent right, but a shared responsibility among Canadians. The plan continues to guide Canadian policy development and calls on all sectors of society, including children, to play a role in moving Canada's vision for children forward.

In 2006, there were nearly 8 million Canadians under the age of 19, representing 24 per cent of our total population. Approximately 5 per cent of that population are aboriginal, and they often live in rural and isolated areas and face serious socio-economic challenges, especially related to the lack of education and skills, as well as adequate health services.

Our Government is working to ensure that all Canadian children, including Canada's aboriginal children and youth, are healthy. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with aboriginal leaders and provincial and territorial Governments, is striving to improve the socio-economic well-being of aboriginal children and families through consideration of their unique needs.

While half of our youth are in post-secondary education, many without advanced education will face problems when entering a workforce where many jobs are now highly skilled. Those issues are of major concern in a country like Canada, with the impending retirement of its aging population and the increasing impact of globalization.

Globally, child mortality rates are dropping and immunization rates have increased, yet HIV/AIDS still continues to threaten children's lives. In Canada, while the number of children exposed to HIV from their mothers has declined due to increased antiretroviral treatment of women, the proportion of older youth contracting HIV is still significant.

All of us here today understand that children are one of the most vulnerable populations in the world and that, as such, they need and deserve our protection, particularly from violence and exploitation. In Canada,

the Government has moved forward with policies, laws and practices that can better protect children, such as stronger penalties for the trafficking of persons, including children. Provincial and territorial child welfare legislation has been strengthened to prohibit a range of violence, including physical and sexual assault, emotional harm, exposure to domestic violence and forms of neglect. Canada is pursuing efforts across the continuum of interventions to prevent all forms of family violence, including child maltreatment and neglect. Canada is also pleased to have been involved in the United Nations study on violence against children and trusts that this comprehensive study will have a permanent impact on the policies of the United Nations and agencies, as well as the United Nations Member States.

In closing, we wish to highlight that the rights of the child should be a priority for us all. We call on States that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In our individual and collective efforts, let us direct our full attention to the implementation of that critically important Convention.

I would also like to join with others here, on behalf of the Canadian Government and the Canadian people, to express our sympathy to the people, both of the United Nations and Algeria, who lost their lives and their families. We stand with the United Nations and strongly condemn those attacks.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Anil Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development of India.

**Mr. Kumar** (India): We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report on this occasion.

The progress made so far in achieving the identified goals and targets in the outcome of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, entitled "A world fit for children", is rather mixed. The decrease in official development assistance (ODA) for developing countries from 0.33 per cent of the donors' total gross national product in 2005 to 0.3 per cent in 2006 needs reconsideration. It not only reduces the financing available to the

developing countries for investing in children, but will also adversely affect the timely achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We support the call by the Secretary-General to fill the financing gap by raising the ODA volumes of the developed countries.

India is committed to the development of every child and to ensuring his or her rights and protection in our country. India has been adopting an integrated approach for the welfare of children, who comprise 42 per cent of the country's population — the largest child population in the world. The National Charter for Children, adopted in February 2004, is a statement of intent embodying the Government's agenda for the development of children.

Our achievements in respect of all the indicators for children over the past decade, particularly since 2002, have been positive. A child budgeting review has been initiated for the proper governance and accountability of programmes and schemes. The aggregate outlay for child-specific schemes as a proportion of the total central budget more than doubled from 2001 to 2006. The Government has resolved to increase public spending on education to at least 6 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Public spending on health would be increased to 2-3 per cent of the GDP in the next five years, focusing on primary health care.

The largest early childhood development programme in the world is currently being implemented in India under the Integrated Child Development Services, extending services to over 41 million beneficiaries, comprised largely of children and pregnant and lactating mothers.

India has made free and compulsory education a fundamental right of all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. A universal elementary education scheme in India, entitled *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan*, has contributed significantly to India's moving towards the realization of Millennium Development Goal 2 on achieving universal primary education. It increased the net enrolment ratio in primary education to 95 per cent by 2005. The scheme also reduced the number of out-of-schoolchildren from 32 million in 2001 to 7 million in 2006.

India has a proactive stand on the issue of child protection and on creating a protective environment for children. Towards that end, India has undertaken several initiatives, notably a National Commission for

the Protection of Child Rights, set up in February 2007 to ensure the effective implementation of laws and programmes relating to children. No violence against children can be justified, and all violence against children can and must be prevented. An integrated child protection scheme is likely to be launched in the near future in India.

India remains strongly committed to the full eradication of all forms of child labour and to moving on progressively to its complete elimination. The ban on employment in India of children under the age of 14 as domestic help or at eateries marks an important milestone in this respect. India is running the largest worldwide programme to withdraw children from economic activities and to rehabilitate them under an expanded national child labour project scheme.

India is committed to promoting healthy lives and combating HIV/AIDS, particularly in those children who are infected or at a risk. Last July, we launched the first comprehensive national policy on children and AIDS in India. In our endeavours, we are working closely with civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations, whose cooperation has been invaluable in bringing our efforts to fruition.

We would also like to commend the work of UNICEF on behalf of the world's children. UNICEF deserves our full support and cooperation in its efforts.

In conclusion, India reiterates its commitment to ensuring the rights, protection and complete development of every child in the country. India will work towards complete and timely realization of the goals of "A world fit for children" as well as the related Millennium Development Goals.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Bobby Mbunji Samakai, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development of Zambia.

**Mr. Samakai** (Zambia): First, I wish to express on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Zambia our deep condolences and sympathies to the Government and the people of Algeria and to the United Nations on the sad loss of the lives in the senseless terrorist attacks in Algeria yesterday. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

It is an honour for my delegation to participate in this important Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of

the Special Session on Children. My delegation welcomes this opportunity to evaluate the progress that has been achieved in realizing the commitments set out in the final document of the twenty-seventh special session, "A world fit for children", and to identify new challenges in order to redirect our actions to achieve further progress.

In this regard we welcome the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General (A/62/259), which offers us a good basis for our discussions. We take note of the recommendations contained therein, which merit our careful consideration.

Allow me to associate my delegation with the statement delivered by the Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs of Ghana on behalf of the African Union. We welcome the important regional initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of our children who are indeed tomorrow's future. We fully support the call for accelerated action on the implementation of the Plan of Action towards An Africa Fit for Children, 2008-2012, endorsed by our Ministers at the second Pan-African Forum on Children, held recently in Cairo.

The Government of Zambia remains committed to promoting the well-being of children, which is evidenced by the integration of the commitments of "A world fit for children" and the Millennium Development Goals in our revised national child policy, our fifth national development plan and our poverty reduction strategies. Zambia has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments related to the child. Furthermore, Zambia has embarked on the process of reviewing various elements of its legislation to bring them into line with international standards.

Allow me to highlight Zambia's experience in the implementation of the four major goals of "A world fit for children". In the area of promoting healthy lives, Zambia considers child survival to be a fundamental right which must be enjoyed by every child. Every effort must therefore be made in order to ensure the creation of an environment which guarantees the survival of children.

Zambia's efforts in promoting healthy lives for children has faced many challenges. The high incidence of HIV/AIDS, coupled with high poverty levels, has contributed to high infant and child mortality rates, which stand at 95 and 168 per 1,000 live births, respectively. In this regard, Zambia has

undertaken a number of measures to address these challenges, including universal child immunization, improved management of malaria and other childhood diseases and the adoption of a system of integrated management of childhood diseases.

The importance of providing quality education for our children cannot be overemphasized. The urgent need for universal primary education is central to the Millennium Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Zambia considers investing in the education of children to be a sure way of securing their future. It has therefore undertaken a number of positive measures, including the provision of free basic education, which has resulted in a significant rise in school attendance for both boys and girls. Furthermore, Zambia is implementing a programme for the advancement of girl child education to improve the retention of girls in school. In addition the school curriculum has been revised to incorporate children's rights issues in school.

The protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence is essential to the development of our children. The ever-increasing number of orphans and vulnerable children has posed a great challenge for us to provide adequate protection for this category of children. In our efforts to protect children, Zambia has undertaken measures which include the review of child protective acts to provide for stiffer penalties for perpetrators of violence against children. Furthermore, the Government has continued to support efforts of non-governmental organizations and other institutions caring for orphans and vulnerable children.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on all sectors of the economy, as well as on communities, households and particularly children, continues to be a major challenge for Zambia. One of the main objectives in "A world fit for children" and the Millennium Development Goals is to reduce the prevalence of HIV, particularly among mothers and children, and to pursue diverse programmes to cope with the effects of HIV/AIDS on children and vulnerable families. In our effort to tackle the problem of HIV/AIDS, a multisectoral integrated strategic plan aimed at prevention of HIV transmission, in addition to treatment, care and support, has been developed. A number of key measures and initiatives are therefore being implemented, including the scaling up of programmes for prevention of mother-to-child transmission and the provision of free antiretroviral medications.

I am pleased to report that with the support of our cooperating partners, Zambia has also introduced paediatric antiretroviral formulations to children. With regard to information provision to children, Zambia has revised the school curriculum to incorporate discussion of issues related to HIV/AIDS.

Although Zambia has recorded some progress in the implementation of the goals of "A world fit for children", much more remains to be done for us to achieve the set targets in the remaining period. Accelerated action is therefore required, particularly in the area of resource mobilization, and we will continue to call on the international community, our cooperation partners and, indeed, civil society, to support our efforts in achieving these goals. It is our hope that this Meeting will further strengthen our resolve to ensure that our children live their lives in a secure and healthy environment where their rights are protected. We owe it to our children to make a difference to their lives and create a world fit for them.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): Before calling on the next speaker, I would like to announce that the summaries of round tables 1 and 2 of this Commemorative Meeting will be presented by the co-chairs of the round tables at 3 p.m. today as the first item for the afternoon meeting.

I would also like to remind speakers of the request that statements be no longer than the suggested five minutes, in order to enable the largest possible number of delegations to take part as scheduled.

I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Sara Oviedo, Executive Secretary of the National Council of Children and Adolescents of Ecuador and Chair of the Inter-American Children's Institute.

**Ms. Oviedo** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like, on behalf of my Government, to express our rejection of the terrorist acts committed in Algeria yesterday and the feelings of profound solidarity of the people of Ecuador with the Government and the sister people of Algeria and with the United Nations, which has lost valuable friends and colleagues.

It is a great honour for me to be here and to be able to represent my country. There is no doubt that Ecuador is among the countries that has most expeditiously signed international agreements and treaties in order to create a legal framework to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents,

convinced as we are that such instruments are the road map leading us in the right direction and in the shortest possible time towards a new society that gives priority to children and adolescents.

Today, when the Convention on the Rights of the Child has turned 18, and thus has come of age, and when one of the key instruments in this sphere, the Plan of Action contained in “A world fit for children” (see resolution S-27/2, annex), is being evaluated, is a unique opportunity for Ecuador to set forth the major progress that we have made and to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of the citizens’ revolution to guarantee the rights of our 5 million children and adolescents, respecting cultural differences of the 8 per cent who are indigenous children and the 5 per cent who are of African descent.

We have no doubt that we are moving forward. In July 2003, the new law on children and adolescents entered into force. It consistently draws inspiration from the Convention and is of the highest ethical quality. In two years — from 2002 to 2004 — we reduced maternal mortality by three percentage points and infant mortality by nearly two. In recent years, Ecuador has achieved an unprecedented rate in basic education enrolment: 90.88 per cent. But major differences remain between urban and rural areas, and among people of different ethnicities. The social agenda for children and adolescents presented by the national Government in March contains ambitious goals on each of these themes and sets out to eradicate violence in the educational system, which has become a national challenge.

In the face of the new forms of violence, discrimination and slavery — I am referring here to child trafficking, child prostitution and sex tourism, forced migration because of economic conditions, transnational gangs and international thievery, among other ills — Ecuador has made major progress. It has reformed its penal code and has defined plans of action that are currently being fully implemented. Since these problems go beyond the borders of our country, we must have better coordination among ourselves in order to deal with them.

In our country, children and adolescents have promoted novel processes of citizen participation and mobilization. Their presence here is a right that they have fully won. In November 2006, the “Look Me in the Eyes” campaign promoted the participation of

1 million Ecuadorian children and adolescents, who stated their priorities. On the basis of their demands, the national Government is taking action. One of the most important successes of this process was the establishment in July of the National Consultative Council, the first public body of children and adolescents that will be monitoring progress made by our country to help them.

We also want to stress the South American meeting of young people to discuss climate change that took place in Quito in October, where 170 adolescents demanded from their Governments a clear and consistent approach to deal with this problem.

We are in the process of building the National Protection System, a new institution to guarantee rights and ensure that the various State and society bodies live up to them.

During this decade, Ecuador has achieved a reduction in poverty and in extreme poverty. This is related to the recovery of our economy following our banking crisis, an increase in oil investments, remittances of migrants and a recovery of real salaries. Specifically, the reduction of poverty has made possible a sustained increase in social expenditures in Ecuador, particularly aimed at basic social services. Thus, between 2002 and 2006, social investment increased from \$1.5 to \$2.4 billion. In 2007, a comparable rate of growth will continue.

In that process, however, we have had to deal with serious constraints that must be discussed in forums such as this so that, on the basis of the experience of those who have made more progress, we can draw lessons allowing us to fine-tune our mechanisms for implementing international instruments. To that end, on 29 and 30 November the Inter-American Children’s Institute held a special meeting in Quito to analyse the implementation of new laws relating to children’s issues, public policies and institutional reforms within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, at which important conclusions were reached.

Progress has also demonstrated that the path to be followed if we are to ensure human rights for children and adolescents is the very same that Ecuadorian society as a whole has taken to guarantee the rights of every citizen. It is in that understanding that we in our country have played an active role in the discussion of strategic topics in the historic process of change that

our Government is implementing. In the definition of our economic model and political system, we have identified a genuine and clear opportunity to fulfil our duty to protect the rights of children and adolescents.

In conclusion, we add our voice to the congratulations expressed by many countries to the General Assembly, which will adopt a resolution on the rights of children in the coming days, the text of which stresses the three-year appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children. Ecuador will lend its full support to that representative's mandate.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Anne Jackson, Director for Child Well-Being, Group of the Department of Children, Schools and Family, and Ms. Iqra Bilal and Mr. Alex White, youth delegates, of the United Kingdom.

**Ms. Jackson** (United Kingdom): It is a great pleasure for the United Kingdom to participate in this Commemorative Meeting. We associate ourselves with the statement made by the Portuguese representative on behalf of the European Union.

For the United Kingdom, improving the lives of children and young people is a major policy priority. Since we committed five years ago to playing our part in creating a world fit for children, the United Kingdom Government and our devolved administrations in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have put in place a substantial body of legislation and policy which has further enshrined children's well-being in law and created an effective national framework for children.

In England, a new children's plan published yesterday sets out a comprehensive set of actions to improve the well-being, health and education of children and young people and to help us make further progress in the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Wales, the rights to action agenda based on the Convention provides a framework for planning for children and young people. Scotland has developed a vision and plan of action for all Scotland's children to be confident individuals, successful learners and responsible citizens. A similar vision lies underneath Northern Ireland's 10-year strategy for children and young people and its action plan, published earlier this year.

Internationally, the United Kingdom is deeply committed to tackling child and intergenerational poverty and to improving the conditions of children in countries in which our Department for International Development works. That includes ensuring that children and young people have a direct say in policies and programmes that affect them, given the clear evidence of the impact that this has on the quality and reach of our programmes, and, as the second largest donor to UNICEF last year, helping to fund child protection programmes to help children and adolescents most at risk and vulnerable to HIV infection. It means a focus on education, which is key to achieving the Millennium Goals. The United Kingdom is providing \$15 billion over 10 years to support countries in developing ambitious 10-year investment plans for the education sector to achieve the education Millennium Development Goals. Education is at the heart of the Millennium Development Call to Action that Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Secretary-General Ban launched in July, with the support of heads of Government and private sector leaders.

Finally, I would highlight the United Kingdom's work to tackle online child abuse. Since 2006, a new Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre enables the public, law enforcers and the communications industry to report the targeting of children online. The Centre carries out proactive investigations, works with police forces around the world and plays an active role in the range of international efforts to protect children online.

We should all celebrate our progress and the commitment shown at the very highest level in this Assembly. Nonetheless, in the United Kingdom we are very conscious that much more remains to be done, both domestically and internationally, to tackle issues such as child abuse, poverty and improving the health and well-being of all our children.

I am delighted to ask my youth colleagues, Iqra Bilal and Alex White, to say a few words about some of the issues on which we need to work, together with our young people, in the United Kingdom.

**Ms. Bilal** (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom Government has invested a lot of money, both domestically and internationally, in improving education and to ensure that children have access to good health care. We would also like to highlight the

good work done by the United Kingdom Government on child trafficking.

Within the United Kingdom, there is an extensive youth participation network giving young people lots of opportunity to express their views in youth forums, such as the United Kingdom Youth Parliament, school councils and youth advisory bodies. However, to further improve youth participation, we have to ensure that every school has a school council, that youth forums are more accessible and widely publicized, and that children's rights are part of every child's life.

We also feel that children who are in different circumstances for whatever reason must get the opportunity to have their voices heard, influence decision-making and be treated with respect and dignity. Those would include children in prisons, child asylum-seekers and refugees, and children not in school.

**Mr. White** (United Kingdom): We would also like children and young people to be more involved in the democratic and political decision-making processes, both domestically and internationally.

We are both involved in a project which has allowed us to hear the ideas and views of many different children in England. By doing so, we found that many children do not know about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. So the question is: How will children in the United Kingdom and internationally be able to defend their rights or get support if they do not know that those rights exist?

In the United Kingdom, we would also like to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination and promote equality and respect between people of all ages.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yitzhak Kadman, Executive Director and Founder of the National Council for the Child of Israel, and Mr. Shay Zavdi, youth delegate.

**Mr. Kadman** (Israel): First, let me add my delegation's condolences to the Algerian people for the loss of so many innocent lives.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his able stewardship of the Assembly and to thank him for convening this important meeting. It is an honour for me to represent my Government at this

High-level Meeting, along with Maya Flomboim and Shay Avshalom Zavdi, who are here representing all the children of Israel at the UNICEF Children's Forum.

Israel is proud to participate in this Meeting as a follow-up to the special session on children. My delegation wishes to extend congratulations to Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, to the Secretary-General — who is far away, although I am sure he is with us in spirit — and to all the relevant United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations for their important work on behalf of the children of the world.

Normally, when various representatives and delegations come to the General Assembly, the dividing lines that separate them are the borders between countries and between nations. Today, at this special Meeting, the distinction needs to be suspended. All of us — the world of adults, without differentiation by religion, nationality, race or gender — need to stand together to make the world a better place for our children, all children of the world. We must speak with one voice in condemnation of such immoral practices as child labour, the recruitment of child soldiers and other forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. Israel is committed to those objectives, and it is in this vein that we welcomed the outcome document of the special session in 2002 (see resolution S/27-2, annex).

Israel's strong commitment to children's rights can be seen in its accession in 1990 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was reaffirmed in our signing, in November 2001, of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention. Beyond the regular activities for children carried out by Government offices, municipalities and non-governmental organizations in Israel, I wish to refer to a number of innovative, unique pioneering programmes which we are more than willing to share with all members.

The independent Ombudsman for Children and Youth serves as an advocate for all children in Israel across the nation, fielding 10,000 inquiries each year regarding all aspects of life. That Office employs professionals representing all groups in the population in various languages. The Children's Rights Mobile Unit provides creative and enjoyable educational programmes to teach children's rights and responsibilities to elementary-school-age children around the country. "The State of the Child in Israel", a comprehensive statistical abstract published annually,



reviews all aspects and dimensions regarding the state of the child in Israel, and is regarded as a best-seller among academicians, practitioners and policymakers alike.

Furthermore, I am proud to note that, since 2000, Israel has prohibited the use of corporal punishment both at home and in school, a policy that meets the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and that, unfortunately, fewer than 20 nations around the world have adopted to date.

Although we are certain that many other countries have made positive advancements for children and their rights since the last gathering, in 2002, we must remember that much more remains to be done. Declarations about the future cannot replace action today. We must not ignore the children's present, as stated so well by Janusz Korczak, the well-known Polish-Jewish children's author, paediatrician and child pedagogue, and a true pioneer of children's rights, who called children "individuals who are people, not people-to-be, not people of tomorrow, but people now, right now — today".

The growth and plague of global terrorism has led to the rise of a number of interrelated dangers, prominent among them the blurring of the distinction between combatant and civilian, in contravention of international law. Most reprehensible is that terrorists deliberately target civilians and that, in many of these cases, children are the primary victims.

Surely there is no monopoly on suffering. In the conflict in my region, Israeli and Palestinian children have both suffered unjustly, and it is the obligation of all parties to respect their rights and adhere to the rule of law. The life of every child, no matter his or her nationality, is precious. Hence, it is the responsibility of the nations of the region to ensure for children a prosperous, safe and nurturing present and future. There is no interest of higher importance. Indeed, the protection of children is a cause that can even bring us adults together and heal the rifts in our region.

In just one example of how the welfare of children crosses political boundaries, three Israeli doctors recently travelled to Jordan on behalf of Save a Child's Heart, an Israeli humanitarian organization, to treat Iraqi children. The organization has treated more than 1,700 children, including many Arabs — Palestinians, Jordanians and Iraqis.

In closing, I wish to share with delegations here today a formula whose impact I have seen during my time as the founder and Director of Israel's National Council for the Child. With the Chair's kind permission, let me call upon my young colleague, Shay Zavdi, who represents Israeli children, to share with the Assembly this formula that is so important to children.

**Mr. Zavdi** (Israel): When we skimp on education, we pay in ignorance. When we skimp on health, we pay in sickness. When we skimp on safety, we pay in accidents. When we skimp on welfare, we pay in distress. When we skimp on reducing gaps, we pay in polarization. When we skimp on prevention, we pay in delinquency. When we skimp on treatment, we pay in violence. When we skimp on early childhood, we pay twice with youth in distress. When we skimp on social workers, we pay in policemen. When we skimp on preventive medicine, we pay in hospitals.

**Mr. Kadman** (Israel): Let me conclude by saying that our actions directly impact the environment our children live in. Our decisions and choices can pave the way for peril or for peace. It is the road we take that determines our children's fate. Thus, it remains our primary responsibility to protect and promote their rights in order that every child can live free from fear and have equal opportunities to prosper and flourish.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Amparo Marzal Martínez, Director General for Families and Children of Spain.

**Ms. Marzal Martínez** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to express my condolences on behalf of the people of Spain to the people of Algeria on the tragedy that struck them yesterday.

It is an honour for me to take the floor at this special Commemorative Meeting. I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General and UNICEF for their endeavours to promote, defend and protect children's rights.

Spain endorses the statement made this morning by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the presidency of the European Union.

Five years have elapsed since the convening of the General Assembly's special session on children. At that time, we made major commitments in the

Declaration and Plan of Action, "A world fit for children" (see resolution S/27-2, annex). In the past few years, the Government of Spain has undertaken a considerable number of legislative and social initiatives calling attention to the needs of children and adolescents as citizens possessing full rights.

Our progress in all aspects of legislative development has facilitated the incorporation of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the laws that govern our society. The evaluation report on the special session on children and its Plan of Action that Spain presented last year shows that the indicators requested by UNICEF reflect a substantial improvement in the well-being of children. In addition, children themselves are aware of this fact, as, according to the 2007 report of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre entitled "Report Card on Child Well-being in Rich Countries", submitted to the States members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Spain is the country second most highly rated by children themselves in terms of how they perceive their well-being. This pleases us, to be sure, but it also obliges us to continue.

The international commitment we accepted in 2002 has enabled us to identify our objectives through the development and adoption of the National Strategic Plan for Children and Adolescents 2006-2009, a plan agreed upon by all public administrations, non-governmental organizations and other social actors involved in the protection and the promotion of the rights of children and adolescents, with the participation of the main actors: children themselves.

The National Strategic Plan was presented in the framework of the third Intergovernmental Conference on Making Europe and Central Asia Fit for Children, the regional preparatory conference for this Commemorative Meeting, which Spain had the honour of organizing in collaboration with UNICEF and of hosting in the city of Palencia in June 2006. In attendance were high-level representatives of 54 countries of the region and of international organizations, among which the Council of Europe played an important role, along with non-governmental organizations, university experts and children's advocates. The Palencia Declaration that we adopted reflects our joint efforts and our commitment to joint action.

In recent years, the main concern of the Government of Spain has been focused on promoting knowledge and action and to evaluate the effective implementation of the rights of children. To that end, in Spain, we have a permanent body in charge of following up social policies affecting children. The Children's Observatory, whose main objective is to create an information system to identify the actual situation of the child population and thus lead and develop actions in order to improve their quality of life. In this context, the Government of Spain is carrying out, together with the regional administrations, programmes for purposes such as preventing and eradicating child abuse, reconciling family and work life and helping families in particularly difficult situations and unaccompanied foreign children.

Spain is also strengthening a culture of social participation on children's issues, basically through the non-governmental organization movement, establishing communication channels and methods of programme financing through funding by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Our Government has made a commitment to non-governmental organizations that it will increase the volume of funds to be allocated to them by raising the related State tax rate from 0.52 per cent to 0.7 per cent on individual personal income.

Spain has become an immigration-receiving country and is increasingly a place where diverse cultures live together. This also has an influence on the approach of public action to benefit children. Our commitment to guarantee the best possible quality of life for children, without regard to their personal, family and social circumstances, has come to fruition in the recognition of the right to equal opportunity in education, health and social services for all foreign children in our country.

Another challenge is the need to redouble our efforts and promote the establishment of health, education and integration resources for children and adolescents with disabilities of any kind. Here I would highlight, for example, the new National System of Care for Dependent Persons, which strengthens early detection and assistance services for the youngest children. I am also proud to say that Spain recently became the tenth country to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the fifth country to ratify its Optional Protocol. During the negotiations, Spain worked for the

inclusion of a specific article on children with disabilities.

At the international level, Spain participates in a multitude of international forums and organizations devoting special attention to the rights of the child. Spain has always tried to focus its cooperation on the most vulnerable sectors. Thus, we have made significant contributions to the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) project of the International Labour Organization, which works to eradicate child labour in Latin America. Indigenous children groups continue to be a particular focus, through our bilateral cooperation as well as through UNICEF. Furthermore, Spain has substantially increased its cooperation in the education and health care sectors, especially with respect to children, in order to help break the vicious circle of poverty, to help attain the Millennium Development Goals and to fight against any kind of social exclusion.

Like previous delegations, we too wish to express our gratitude for the important role of children's advocates, and to convey our support to all forums that facilitate the tasks that we are all carrying out together, namely, to safeguard the fulfilment of the rights of children. In this respect, we hail the meeting of children's advocates from all over the world which has taken place in the framework of this Commemorative Meeting. We hope to make progress with its proposals.

Finally, I would like to express our hope that projects for children become firm responsibilities in each of our countries and become set as priorities for Government action. Our commitments to children must appear in capital letters in our political agendas and in the marshalling of the social and economic resources needed to attain the world we desire so much: a just world — a world fit for children.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Elvira Forero Hernández, Director General of the Institute for Family Welfare, and Mr. José Gregorio Ospino, youth delegate, of Colombia.

**Ms. Forero Hernández** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At this High-level Plenary Meeting, Colombia reaffirms its commitment to the objectives and actions agreed by the General Assembly for building a world fit for children, and reiterates its recognition of the rights of children and adolescents as a national priority.

In Colombia, the rights of boys, girls and adolescents prevail over those of others. The duty is thus enshrined in our Constitution, which also identifies the obligations of the family, society and the State, to protect children from all forms of abandonment, physical or moral violence, kidnapping, sexual abuse, labour or economic exploitation, and hazardous work, among other situations of vulnerability.

My delegation would like to share the progress made in improving the quality of life of over 16 million Colombian boys, girls and adolescents, and the challenges the country faces in that matter.

With respect to the promotion of the welfare and rights of children, of special importance are policies adopted in recent years that have allowed us to create better conditions for coexistence and security in the country, reduce crime and generate economic recovery and social development. As a result, we have advanced towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and in building a safer and more stable environment in which boys and girls will be able to develop their individual capacities. Moreover, the adoption of specific laws and policies has been fundamental in strengthening the regulatory framework, our actions and the institutional system responsible for the promotion of the comprehensive development of children.

With the adoption of a new law on childhood and adolescence in 2006, Colombian children are now considered to be rights-holders, and not merely the objects of protection. The new legislative framework seeks to guarantee their integral development so that they can grow within their families and community in a safe and protective environment. From early childhood, emphasis is placed on the guarantee of such inherent rights as identity, education, health care and nutrition, a comprehensive vaccination programme, and protection against any form of mistreatment or abuse. Furthermore, a national development plan for the period 2006-2010, entitled "A community State: Development for all", includes strategies for improving the treatment and care services for children, and specifically those related to early childhood.

As a result of the ongoing support of the Government of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez, over the past five years it has been possible to double the budget invested in children by the Colombian Institute

for Family Welfare, the main entity of the institutional system for the development and implementation of specific childhood policies.

Additionally, a constitutional amendment adopted in July established new transfers of budgetary resources to comprehensive early childhood care, which may be allocated when the growth rate of the national economy exceeds 4 per cent annually. The reform is encouraging when we consider that economic growth has recently been more than 6 per cent annually.

Among our accomplishments in public policy in recent years, we have advanced the “Colombia for early childhood” initiative; a food and nutritional security policy that incorporates the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations guidelines; the programmes “Make peace” and “Housing with welfare”, aimed at families to combat domestic violence; a strategy to eradicate child labour; a support programme for homeless children and youths, which enjoys the support of the European Union; and a sexual and reproductive health policy that includes the promotion of health.

In education, the country is progressing solidly towards achieving universal coverage in basic education by 2010 and a substantial increase in middle and higher education. All that has been accomplished without discrimination between boys and girls as regards their access to the educational system. The Government also intends to meet the goal of providing early education and comprehensive attention to a further 400,000 boys and girls under the age of 5.

Concerning food and nutrition programmes, the State has gone from reaching 3 million children in 2002 to 9 million in 2007, and the goal is to reach 12 million by the end of 2010.

With respect to juvenile offenders of the law, a new special system of criminal responsibility has been established that is educational, specific and differentiated, and whose implementation is advancing progressively.

The Colombian Institute for Family Welfare, in coordination with the Ministries of Education and Social Protection, the Ombudsman’s Office, the Office of the High Advisory for Social Reintegration and other international cooperation organizations, also implements a programme to provide care for children

and adolescents who have been separated from illegal armed groups. As of early November 2007, 3,416 children and youth in that situation have been assisted through educational, psychological and protective measures, the restitution of their rights, and follow-up, all formulated in a gender perspective. Additionally, to prevent the use of children by illegal armed groups, comprehensive measures include childhood policies at the departmental and municipal levels; community awareness campaigns; social programmes focused on high-risk municipalities; the promotion of youth participation in preventive programmes; early warning systems; and the prevention of diverse situations of domestic violence. Those actions have the support of UNICEF, the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration and a large group of States. The Colombian armed forces, which fully respect their obligation not to recruit children, have also strengthened strategies to prevent the utilization of children by illegal armed groups, including awareness campaigns.

In order to further strengthen the prevention of that phenomenon, on 3 December the national Government established the Intersectorial Committee for the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Children, Adolescents and Youth by Illegally Organized Groups. Led by the nation’s Vice-President, the Committee will allow us to efficiently implement the national policy related to recruitment prevention through effective measures at the national and local levels.

In order to consolidate the achievements attained to date, a strategy entitled “Facts and rights: Municipalities and departments acting for childhood, adolescence and youth” is being applied under the aegis of the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare and the National Attorney’s Office, and in cooperation with UNICEF.

In accordance with the law on childhood and youth, the State has also formulated a national plan for childhood and youth 2007-2017, entitled “Colombia: a country for girls and boys”, which will require all children without exception to enjoy adequate living conditions, protection, development and participation within a decade.

Colombia calls upon the international community to continue to support the objectives that we have identified in our national policies, particularly in the

most vulnerable areas of the country. The resolve of donor countries and cooperators will be decisive for the full and effective implementation of policies aimed at consolidating better living conditions and guaranteeing the rights of children.

From this Hall, I appeal, on behalf of the most vulnerable, exploited and unprotected children, for a positive response to the proposal of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez. In this holiday season, may the boy Emmanuel, born in captivity as both he and his mother remain the victims of kidnapping, recover his freedom and spend this Christmas in full joy.

I would now ask my colleague, José Gregorio Ospino, youth delegate in our delegation, to say a few words.

**Mr. Ospino** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The inclusive and joint work of adults, youth and children is essential. The commitment of all States, which is to be ratified today at this Assembly, is a fundamental step in consolidating and preserving an environment of happiness, love and understanding that will allow us to realize the dreams of the boys, girls and adolescents of the world.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Guenter Nooke, Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid of Germany.

**Mr. Nooke** (Germany): It is an honour for me to address this high-level audience on behalf of the German Government. Germany welcomes and fully supports this timely initiative to re-energize international efforts to create a world fit for children, and I would like to particularly welcome all children present here today.

Witnessed by the children of the world, heads of State and Government and delegations from 190 countries committed their countries at the General Assembly's special session on children in 2002 to an ambitious, time-bound agenda with specific goals for children and a general framework for reaching them. We expressed our firm determination to seize the historic opportunity to change the world for and with children.

Germany has listened carefully to the call that went out from the special session in 2002. In February 2005, the federal cabinet approved a national action plan entitled "For a Germany fit for children 2005-

2010". It seeks to establish child and youth policy as a field of politics in its own right. The plan contains around 170 measures to be implemented by 2010 to improve the lives of children and families. It is divided into six national priority fields of action: equal opportunities through education; a non-violent upbringing; promoting a healthy life and environment; the participation of children and young people; developing an adequate standard of living for children; and international commitments.

In developing the plan, the German Government worked closely with key players from politics and civil society. A national interim progress report will be published in 2008. In line with the recommendations of the 2002 special session, Germany's third country report on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child will include another evaluation of our national action plan.

To achieve our national objectives and to further promote and protect the rights of our children, the Federal Government has also taken legislative action in recent years, including the adoption this year of a law on child credit and parental leave. In addition, the Federal Government has initiated specific programmes to further improve the lives of children, such as a capital investment programme, entitled "Future of education and care", to build up all-day schooling in Germany, as well as a campaign for the development of early assistance for parents and children and social early-warning systems to identify risks and to prevent threats to children's well-being.

In April 2007, national, State and local Governments in Germany agreed to triple the number of places in childcare available for children under three to 750,000 by 2013. The federal Government will adopt accompanying measures to improve the quality of work in childcare facilities. It also plans to give financial support to companies offering childcare.

The German Government also aims to involve children and young people in political decision-making and design processes affecting their future. Children and young people participate actively in the development and implementation of our national action plan. The results are reflected in a children and youth report complementing the plan.

Moreover, Germany continues to fully support initiatives at the regional and international levels and in international human rights forums to make

children's rights a priority in international policies and decision-making processes. In the first half of 2007, Germany proposed the development of new European Union (EU) guidelines on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The project was successfully concluded two days ago with the adoption of the guidelines by the EU Council. They are further proof of the EU's determination to give children's rights the utmost priority in its external human rights policy.

In concluding, I would like to underline that Germany looks forward to continued close cooperation with all like-minded partners and at all levels to implement the rights of the child and the many commitments made in that respect, particularly at the previous World Summit for Children and the special session of 2002 and as enshrined in a comprehensive framework of international human rights instruments and standards for children, most importantly the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

On behalf of the German Government, I wish this High-level Plenary Meeting every success.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Budi Bowoleksono, Deputy Director-General for Multilateral Affairs of Indonesia.

**Mr. Bowoleksono** (Indonesia): I would like to begin by expressing my delegation's sympathies and condolences to the victims of the heinous act of terrorism and their families, and to the people and Government of Algeria, as well as to United Nations staff members and their families. We pray for the speedy recovery of those injured. We are distressed that students and schoolchildren were among the victims, and expect the immediate arrest and trial of the perpetrators, in accordance with the law.

The delegation of Indonesia recognizes the importance of this High-level Plenary Meeting devoted to evaluating progress made in the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action contained in the document entitled "A world fit for children".

It has been five years since 190 countries, including 69 heads of State, committed themselves to a time-bound set of goals to benefit children. The Secretary-General's report on progress towards the goals of "A world fit for children" acknowledges notable successes made by Member States since 2002,

but also emphasizes that serious challenges persist in all of the priority areas. It is therefore imperative for all of us to vigorously pursue its full implementation.

Indonesia believes that the implementation of the goals to create a world fit for children will greatly advance progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Certainly the two sets of objectives make up a single development agenda, and because they complement one another, the achievement of one will facilitate the achievement of the other.

Ever since the adoption of the declarations and plans of action, we in Indonesia have pursued action at the highest political level possible through the National Programme for Indonesian Children 2015. We have set about formulating and implementing measures to create a child-friendly new world, concentrating on eliminating poverty for its 37 million poor people. Economic growth and employment creation are two of the Indonesian Government's key goals that have helped to equip families and all of society to act in the best interests of children.

In that connection, a committee for poverty alleviation was established in 2002, as was a family hope programme, which assists very poor families in certain provinces. Furthermore, regional political administrations and central Government ministries have made some headway in this area, as well as in gender mainstreaming.

Education is compulsory for children until the age of 13. By 2008 every Indonesian child is expected to be enrolled in the compulsory basic education programme. Work is being done to significantly increase enrolment at the secondary level. Data for the year 2006 indicate no difference in the enrolment rates of boys and girls in primary and secondary schools. Child labour legislation also works to prevent their premature entry into the workplace and encourages children to attend school.

Apart from expanding the nation's capacity to educate its children, equity in the quality of education is improving for boys and girls. Enhanced programmes are being implemented to prevent gender-biased disciplines, and school curricula are being revised to be more gender-sensitive.

Practical health targets have been set to respond to the approximately 5 million malnourished children. They aim to reduce infant and maternal mortality rates

by one third, respectively, each from their 2001 levels. Plans are in place to implement a national health programme for young adolescents, while efforts are under way to revive the village-based integrated health system to benefit mothers and children in rural areas, where 75 per cent of our malnourished children live.

In addition, the health of the young is being threatened more and more by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. AIDS prevention is being mainstreamed in the national education curriculum. Young adolescents, especially females, are being empowered to safeguard themselves against AIDS.

While hunger and disease take their toll on children, young people are also subjected to various other forms of physical abuse and exploitation. For those who find themselves in faraway places working as domestic servants and being abused in various households, laws have been enacted to protect and promote their rights. Furthermore, community approaches like the Stop Violence against Children Campaign, launched last month by the State Ministry for Women's Empowerment and UNICEF, aims to instil values making child abuse culturally unacceptable.

Recognizing the dangers that haunt parentless children, Indonesia is taking care to protect those who have become orphans because of natural disasters and to reduce the population of street children in the country. Consistent with our national policy to reinforce the family unit as the foundation for children, Indonesia strongly supports reunification of children orphaned because of disasters with their closest of kin. Their full recovery would also depend on a supportive environment that offers special services. In Aceh province, children-centred programmes in various municipalities were established to help children traumatized by the tsunami.

One of the world's major challenges still causing great concern for Indonesia is the painful reality of school-aged children bearing arms and making life-and-death decisions in situations of conflict. Guided by the findings of the Machel Study, we must exert maximum pressure to ensure that children are not abused in this manner. There must be no child soldiers anywhere.

As our deliberations take place here in New York, the world has descended on Bali, Indonesia, to discuss the future of our planet. In many ways the Bali meeting

will have an important impact on the future of our children. In fact, President Yudhoyono emphasized that we must do all we can in the present for the sake of our children in the future. In view of the continuing degradation of our planet's resources, international dialogue and cooperation must continue to receive the needed support.

All of our various initiatives serve to facilitate the creation of a world fit for Indonesia's children, but we are not unmindful that the external international environment has a decisive impact on national efforts to improve conditions to help children. The continued financing for development, capacity-building and transfer of technology are essential to assist countries in tackling the many challenges affecting their children.

In terms of our efforts involving international organizations in the field, we have found that maintaining coherence and coordination is crucial to avoid wasteful duplication. Furthermore, it helps to channel expertise into areas where the needs of children are most critical. Such an approach will serve to intensify the implementation process at all levels.

Approaching 2015, we are reminded through this meeting of our achievements thus far, but also of the work still to be done. For Indonesia, the 2002 vision is a vivid reminder for all stakeholders in Indonesia of their responsibility for the nation's future, and we therefore challenge them to do even more to safeguard that future. Indonesia is determined to ensure the increasing capability and well-being of all its children because people are the nation's most precious resource.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Dilorom Mirsaidova, Head of the Division on Youth Affairs, Sports and Tourism of the Office of the President of Tajikistan.

**Ms. Mirsaidova** (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to greet the Assembly on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. In taking this opportunity, I would like to express our gratitude for the invitation to participate in today's meeting.

Tajikistan, as an independent State, chose a social State as its model. That is fixed in its Constitution and determines the priorities in government policies in the sphere of social protection and social development. Therefore, State support for families and children is recognized by the Government as a high priority. That

is linked, first of all, with the urgent tasks dictated in the past at the time of independence and during the transitional period from one social system to another.

Civil conflict and its consequences have also negatively affected families and children. Of a population of 7 million, 2.8 million are under the age of 18. Moreover, the high birth rate and the migration of labour abroad have created other difficulties. Nevertheless, there have been tangible achievements in the country, and a great deal has been done to solve socio-economic problems. The sphere of social protection of children is no exception.

Since the end of the 1990s, we have gradually been implementing reforms in the social sector. We have annually increased the relevant budgetary allocations, focusing closely on orphans, children with limited capacities and children with abnormal behaviour. At this stage of the reform, with the aim of implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in accordance with Tajikistan's initial report, and to fulfil our international obligations with regard to protection of the rights and interests of children, the Government wishes to confirm our national plan of action to protect the rights and interests of children for 2003 to 2010. Moreover, in 2001, with technical support from UNICEF, we established a National Commission on the Rights of the Child, which is headed by the Deputy Prime Minister for Social Questions.

In 2006, the Government, taking into account the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, prepared a second report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. That report reflected the achievements in the protection of the rights of the child, the problems and challenges in the implementation of the Convention and the proposed plans for the future.

This year, the Government prepared a strategy for national development, which determines priorities in the general areas for State policy in order to achieve sustainable economic growth and facilitate access of the population to basic social services. That strategy is fully based on the Millennium Development Goals and was developed by the Government jointly with donor organizations and societies in the country.

We have also developed a health protection strategy to be implemented by 2010 and a programme

on family planning, which covers aspects of mother and child health. The Ministry of Health has adopted a strategy for the integrated management of children's diseases and a programme of immunization, which have helped to stabilize the level of morbidity and infant and child mortality and to achieve a high level of immunization of children under 2 years old.

The Government has undertaken steps to adopt the international definition of criteria for live birth, as set out in standard-setting documents and systematic recommendations. In 2002, laws were adopted on iodized salt, reproductive health and reproductive rights. In 2004, we adopted the country's strategy on reproductive health for the period to 2014.

We have developed a national strategy to protect the health of the population during the period to 2010. We are carrying out programmes on immunization and prevention, including a national programme on the prevention of and fight against HIV. In 1997, we set up a national committee on HIV to strengthen the mechanisms for coordinating the work of interdepartmental sectors of international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the area of HIV/AIDS. The committee is also a monitoring centre for the implementation of the project of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The Republic adopted a national programme to combat tropical diseases over the period 2005 to 2010. A programme for the development of a healthy way of life to 2010 and a national programme to combat and prevent hepatitis B have also been set up.

According to our constitution, basic education in Tajikistan is free and mandatory. In June 2002, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan endorsed the national concept of education, which forms the basis for comprehensive reform in that area. The standard for the education system in the country was adopted in accordance with international standards and formed the legal basis for the work of private educational institutions of various kinds. We have created parent-teacher associations in schools, and the Government has introduced subsidies for students from poor families. Additionally, pilot schools in the capital have carried out a comprehensive initiative in the area of education, which includes human rights as a mandatory subject in the curriculum.

From May to August 2005, the Government, in cooperation with international organizations, carried



out a national study on the nature and scale of child labour. That study was discussed with the broad participation of much of the country, including State workers, academics, research centres, national and international NGOs and international organizations. Along those lines, we joined and ratified the International Labour Organization Convention No. 182, on the worst forms of child labour.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the Government of Tajikistan has set social well-being as a priority in its system for protection of the rights of the child. In that connection, my Government bases its further actions on the study of the possibilities of a continuing integration of the policy of protection of the rights of the child into the national strategy for development, creating policies and strategies to develop social services in partnership with civil society, strengthening the action of the national commission on the rights of the child under the Government of the country, and continuing to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the existing legislation on protecting the rights of the child at all levels and harmonizing it with international norms and standards.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Françoise Tapsoba, General Secretary of the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity of Burkina Faso.

**Ms. Tapsoba** (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Before I begin, I would like to affirm that our delegation aligns itself with the statement made at the 66th meeting by the Ghanaian Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs on behalf of the African Union.

My country, Burkina Faso, has always worked to respect its obligations to children and has manifested this respect, in the eyes of the international community, by adopting the international instruments protecting the rights of the child. That has been confirmed by the follow-up reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. As of today, the third and fourth reports of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the initial report on the African Charter have been submitted to the various international committees assigned to follow them.

Moreover, the priorities for action defined at the special session devoted to children in May 2002 have been integrated in a planning document: the strategic

framework to combat poverty. One of its major concerns is access by the poor to basic social services, social protection, education, social action, health, nutrition, drinking water, sanitation and combating HIV/AIDS.

From this viewpoint, an effort has been made to align the goals and targets of the strategic plans or programmes with those of "A world fit for children". The objectives set in 2002 have also been integrated into various sectoral plans, in line with the strategic framework for combating poverty. I mention, among other things, the 10-year plan for development of basic education for 2001 to 2010, the national plan for sanitation development for 2001 to 2010, the strategic frameworks to combat AIDS for 2001 to 2005 and 2006 to 2010, the national plan of action for the survival, protection and development of the child for 2006 to 2010 and the national plan for the reform of justice for 2002 to 2006.

All those various plans are being implemented, thanks to the efforts of the Government with the support of technical and financial partners and civil society in the areas of health, education, protection, access to drinking water and sanitation, regular follow-ups and evaluation and advocacy for conduct favourable to the rights of the child.

Other initiatives taken by the Government and development partners make it possible to follow progress towards obtaining the objectives of "A world fit for children". That involves, among other things, the use of periodic or one-time surveys, such as the 2006 survey on multiple indicators on health, education, water and sanitation, the standing annual questionnaire on basic indicators of well-being and the 2003 survey on living conditions of households. Also, impact studies of plans, programmes and projects are systematically planned.

While those initiatives are certainly praiseworthy, the actions thus far carried out have been limited due to a lack of financial mobilization, which consequently allows for continuing poverty, burdensome sociocultural problems and a shortage of actions in the areas of information, education and communication.

Despite the difficult socio-economic situation in my country, we still are hopeful, thanks to the efforts already agreed on and to the strong mobilization of our partners.

The period of 2006-2010 will give priority to issues relating to education, survival and child protection.

With regard to education, the new framework law stipulates that education is a national priority and that therefore each citizen has the right to education without discrimination based on sex, social origin, race or religion. School is compulsory for children between 6 and 16 years of age. No child should be nor can be excluded from the educational system before completing his or her sixteenth year.

In terms of health, particular efforts are under way for a major reduction in maternal and infant mortality rates and in malnutrition in children under the age of 5, and for an increase in access to drinking water. These efforts should lead to an increase in budgetary resources for the health sector, in particular, to attain, in the short term, the World Health Organization standard of 10 per cent.

In terms of protection, stress will be laid on the creation of secondary administrative records centres in villages throughout Burkina Faso with free birth registrations within the legal time period of two months following birth. We should also note the implementation of an integrated communication plan to combat the practice of cutting, early marriage, trafficking and the worst forms of child labour, and a study now under way on violence against children.

Moreover, a national policy of social action has been developed, the main objective of which is to promote the well-being of populations in general and of vulnerable individuals, families and groups in particular.

Before concluding, allow me to pay warm tribute to the Secretary-General and to all of his staff for the excellent organization of this meeting and for the opportunity it gives to the international community to focus on such an important question as the rights of children.

I would like to thank and congratulate all technical and financial partners for the support that they have given to Member States for the implementation of programmes for children and, more specifically, UNICEF, for its determination and its much appreciated activities that have made it possible for us to contribute to the development of a mid-term review report and to participate in this session.

We expect a great deal of this session, the results of which, we hope, will help us to further strengthen our policy and our actions for the well-being and development of children.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Victor Giorgi, President of the Institution for Children and Adolescents of Uruguay, as well as youth delegates Mr. Alexis Olivera and Ms. Ximena Luzardo.

**Mr. Giorgi** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): To begin with, I would like to express the solidarity of the Government and the people of Uruguay with the people of Algeria with regard to the events that took place yesterday.

The delegation of Uruguay also wanted to take this opportunity to have adolescents and young people contribute their life experiences and viewpoints on the issues that bring us together today. Thus I will ask that they be allowed to speak first for a few moments, and then I shall take the floor again.

**Mr. Olivera** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to tell you something about children living on the street. Children in my country who are living on the street, those who work, those who beg, are unable to study. They are mistreated, not only by their parents but by society at large. They are rejected by some of the educational institutions. When a young person commits an offence, if that person does not live in the capital city, he or she is taken away from his or her family and friends. What I propose is that every enterprise that comes to my country should have job quotas for young people with few opportunities.

**Ms. Luzardo** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to come here today, on behalf of all the young people and adolescents of Uruguay. This message is for young people like me. We are in danger of starting the use of drugs, and then it is difficult to get out of it. Drugs are not a solution to one's problems. One has to stop, think, fight and get on with one's life and be happy. Thus, I propose that, from an early age, schools provide more information on all drugs in existence and their consequences and, for those who are already consuming drugs, that there be more centres for serious treatment dedicated to this set of problems.

**Mr. Giorgi** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): In the 18 years since the adoption of the Convention on the

Rights of the Child, the social space given by our countries to children and adolescents is full of controversy. Much progress has been made in legal terms, in social policies and speeches that come from the political system, and yet these 18 years have been deeply regressive with regard to wealth distribution, social inclusion and the quality of life of the population in general.

This situation has particularly affected children. The world of adults has become more fragile through the crisis of the family, deterioration in the quality of employment and migration, together with the breakdown of solidarity and the inability of States to guarantee rights. All that has given rise to a crisis in protection and care that mainly affects children and adolescents.

In this context, and despite progress made in recent years, the eradication of poverty and related processes continue to be the main objective in building a world fit for children and adolescents. In Uruguay in 2004, 55 per cent of children lived under the poverty line. Two years later, in 2006, that figure had been reduced by 10 per cent, to the level of 45 per cent, which is excessively high for a country such as ours, which has relatively few children and adolescents. The Uruguayan Government is now developing and will implement on 1 January a fairness plan under the slogan “Towards the construction of a socially protected Uruguay” so that no one is left to fend for him or herself.

This fairness plan embodies a number of activities, among which we would like to stress the transfer of funds through family allocations, which will go from \$14 per day per child to \$32 per day per child, and to \$45 in the case of adolescents, with the provision that they are in the educational system. In 2008 the increased coverage will reach 330,000 children — let us remember that Uruguay has fewer than 1 million children and adolescents — and 500,000 children in 2009. In turn, child and adolescent education and care policies are being developed, with an increase in the coverage for early childhood, from birth to age 3, with special attention being paid to

maintaining quality even as the numbers increase, improving performance and care in primary schools and to social integration through education, health care and social participation of adolescents.

That would lead to reduction of poverty, especially for those less than 18 years old, and to a diffusion of income. In the first decile an average increase of 37 per cent is planned, and in the last decile — that with the greatest incomes — there will be a reduction of 6 per cent. Eight of every 10 boys, girls and adolescents under 18 years of age will benefit from the reforms included in this plan.

In turn, many of these issues are shared at the regional level in the “Niño Niña Sur” initiative, along with others such as the policies on early childhood, the issue of adolescents in conflict with the law, and the need to implement legal measures from a rights perspective.

The entire protection system coordinates cross-cutting programmes, which are inter-institutional and universal in reach. They include a programme for protection of children and adolescents from violence, which this year has made great strides not only by the confirmation of the inter-agency agreement, but also with the recent adoption of the law prohibiting physical punishment. Also, eradication of commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation has been worked on this year. Just a few days ago we were able to announce that we have a national plan, for the first time in history.

Participation of children and adolescents is a concern, and that programme brought the two young people who accompanied us this morning.

Finally, let me reaffirm Uruguay’s commitment to ensure that the rights of children and adolescents will become a reality. These rights are the responsibility of everyone, at the national level and at the level of the international community. Thus we urge all States to continue to work for a world fit for children — which will certainly be a better world everybody.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*