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Chairman: Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 66: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/62/297 and 319; A/C.3/62/2)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/62/182, 209 and 228)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (A/62/259)

1. **Ms. Veneman** (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund) said that since the publication of the study on the impact of armed conflict on children prepared by the expert appointed by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/157 (A/51/306 and Add.1), the world had made some strides in bringing children back from the battlefield and in responding to their needs in situations of conflict. However, much more needed to be done. The 10-year strategic review of that study (A/62/228, part two) showed that despite successes the impact of conflict on children remained as brutal as ever. Children were not only caught in the crossfire; they were also often the intended targets of violence, abuse and exploitation. Over the past decade, children had been victims of strikes against schools and hospitals and had been killed or maimed by landmines and other explosive devices even after fighting had stopped. In conflict zones, their vulnerability was often greatly increased because violence claimed their first line of defence — their parents. Malnutrition, disease, displacement, lack of education and poverty also threatened children's survival and development. Acute malnutrition was a primary cause of child mortality in complex emergencies. As stated in the review, it was imperative that children, especially those caught in conflict, were protected from harm and ensured access to health care, education, clean water and sanitation and social services.

2. The review had benefited from input from United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, Governments and children, including those affected by conflict. In fact, more than 1,700 children and young people from 92 countries had participated through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Voices of Youth website and focus group discussions. She welcomed the presence of two youth representatives at the current meeting. Children's resilience, capacities and ability to contribute to peacemaking and peacebuilding should not be underestimated. She had

met with many children victimized by war, including young women who had been abducted by the rebels at the age of 10. Currently in their late teens or early 20s, most of those young women had had children as a result of being forced to live with rebel soldiers. They had spoken of the difficulties in trying to re-establish a life where they could support themselves and their children. Despite the atrocities which one boy had witnessed, he retained the hope of returning to school and helping to save the lives of others. Such children had been a crucial part of the progress made over the previous decade to highlight the plight of children used by armed forces or groups.

3. The Paris Commitments and Paris Principles signalled the political will to help put an end to the use of children in armed conflict. UNICEF remained committed to contributing to the follow-up of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against children in coordination with its many partners. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had galvanized partners, stakeholders and children themselves to take action around a common cause.

4. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report (A/62/228), said progress had been made over the previous 10 years in improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict, including strengthening of international norms and standards, systematic engagement by the Security Council and increased global awareness of the most effective strategies and programmes for those children. To date, 118 States had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The recent commitment by a number of Governments to the Paris Principles was another encouraging development.

5. Her country visits to observe at first hand the situation on the ground constituted a central element of her advocacy strategy for increased international cooperation and action. In 2007 she had visited the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Lebanon, Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories, Myanmar and, most recently, Cote d'Ivoire. During the course of the visits, parties to conflict had made numerous commitments, some of which were described in detail in the report. Some progress in implementing those commitments had been made. Since 2006, for instance, progress on action plans to end the recruitment of children by armed forces and

groups had been made in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Myanmar, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Chad.

6. The 10-year strategic review presented a sobering analysis of the changing nature of conflict and increased threats to children. While major armed conflicts had decreased in the previous decade, the number of intra-State and lower-intensity conflicts had actually risen. The international community must recognize the changing nature of conflict. War economies which commercialized and prolonged conflict must be better understood and effective action taken to stop the abuse and exploitation of children. There were grey zones of conflict blurring traditional lines between armed conflict and criminal violence, often involving transnational crime, non-traditional warfare and trafficking.

7. To end impunity the international community must translate the previous decade of advances in political engagement, legal instruments and standards into expanded action at the field level. Justice mechanisms must take into account the special needs and rights of children. The review also recommended greater investment in national capacities to ensure that international standards, norms and guidelines on juvenile justice were upheld. Children had become involved in many justice and reconciliation processes as witnesses and victims and needed special, child-friendly procedures to ensure their protection. Reintegrating children and rebuilding families was an essential part of the future. Interventions in health and nutrition needed more consistent support. The review further recommended that programming should include youth-oriented education and livelihood strategies, with particular attention to girls. Schools must be designated as zones of peace, and there must be efforts made to ensure awareness and training on the rights of children at the local level. Children should not be dealt with as lone individuals but as a vital part of families and communities. Youth participation must be an important part of any programme.

8. *A film entitled "Children and Conflict in a Changing World" was projected, featuring the voices of children affected by armed conflict and of child protection actors.*

9. **The Chairman**, introducing Ishmael Beah, said that Mr. Beah had been born in Sierra Leone in 1980 and that his parents and two of his brothers had been

killed in the civil war when he had been barely 11. At age 13 he had been recruited as a child soldier. After two years of soldiering he had been placed in a rehabilitation home in Freetown thanks to UNICEF and had later gone on to complete his high school and college education in New York. He was the author of "A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier" and an outspoken advocate of children affected by war throughout the world.

10. **Mr. Beah** said that he had spoken 10 years previously at the present forum because he had felt the need to share his stories and mobilize the international community to put an end to the ongoing conflicts which continued to affect children. The message of the study on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306 and Add.1) was clear: more must be done for children immediately. He noted with disappointment that the problems raised 10 years previously in the study had not been addressed as urgently as he had hoped. Many strides had been made, including improved international legal standards and the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. However, more needed to be done.

11. He hoped that there would be no need for him to return to the forum in another 10 years to discuss what had not been accomplished. There was an urgent need to include children in the process of conflict and post-conflict resolution. Their voices should be heard. The experience and ideas of children who had been affected by conflict could give fresh impetus to efforts to address conflict and post-conflict situations. Prevention was an essential part of those efforts. States must muster the necessary political will to prevent conflicts before they got out of hand. There was also a need for cultural understanding, so that efforts could benefit fully from the resources already on the ground. He urged Member States to convey to others the message that children continued to suffer and to need their help in alleviating that suffering.

12. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to put questions to the Executive Director of UNICEF, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and Mr. Ishmael Beah.

13. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) said that children were a light that illuminated the way forward for the world; such a light must not be extinguished. In view of the

moving testimony by Mr. Beah, he asked what practical steps the international community should take to protect children in armed conflict.

14. **Ms. Lund** (Norway) commended the report of the Special Representative and particularly the emphasis on post-conflict peacebuilding. She asked how the Special Representative thought that participation by children in decision-making could be further developed.

15. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) noted that six main categories of crimes against children had been identified. In view of the fact that, since the start of the second intifada, nearly 1,000 Palestinian children had been killed and thousands of others maimed, she asked whether the Special Representative, who had visited the occupied Palestinian territories earlier in the year, would care to comment on the following points: the indiscriminate use of force that led to the deaths and maiming of children; the use of children as human shields; the effect on children of impeding access to humanitarian access and services, particularly in Gaza; and the impact of abject poverty arising from armed conflict on the children of the occupied territories.

16. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) commended the work of UNICEF and the Special Representative. Her Government would act on the latter's recommendations, which were based on a thorough understanding of the situation on the ground. She called on the international community to assist Côte d'Ivoire in meeting its commitments.

17. **Mr. Zheglov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation had consistently advocated the involvement of the international community in the protection of children in armed conflict. There must, however, be an even-handed approach to all categories of serious crimes against children; it would be wrong to focus on some at the expense of others. In armed conflict, priority should be given to situations in which children suffered the most. He asked how the Special Representative intended to press for that approach.

18. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that the world had witnessed the brutality of the Israeli army's activities in Lebanon in 2006. Children — of whom 1,200 had been killed and over 2,000 injured — had comprised one third of the total civilian casualties. Nor was the suffering of Lebanese children at an end; 1.2 million cluster bombs, the most cruel of weapons, remained in

place. Noting that the international community was apt to condemn atrocities after the event but seemed unable to prevent them at the time, he asked what action could be taken, for the sake of all children in armed conflict, to provide adequate protection.

19. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile), after welcoming the progress noted in the Special Representative's report with regard to girls in situations of armed conflict, asked which of the Cape Town Principles the Special Representative considered that Governments should give priority to implementing.

20. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed regret that the Special Representative's report had not contained more details on the situation of children in Palestine and Lebanon. Similarly, paragraphs 58 to 71 of the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/62/259) should have contained a reference to the aggression suffered by children in occupied territories. On the question of appointing a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, she said that such a mandate should not cover children in armed conflict. In that connection, she asked whether the Special Representative's current mandate specifically covered children in occupied territories. She had in mind children in the occupied Syrian Golan, for example.

21. **Ms. Simovich** (Israel) said that her delegation took note of the Special Representative's recognition of Hizbullah's cynical exploitation of children in armed conflict and the adverse effects of Palestinian factional fighting on children. Her delegation also welcomed the Special Representative's account of her visit to Sderot, where the children lived under unceasing strain owing to the indiscriminate firing of rockets on schools and kindergartens by terrorists in the Gaza Strip. Her delegation looked forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue with the Special Representative. She also wished to know what progress there had been on the discussions with President Abbas and the Palestinian authorities, at which the President had agreed to revive a code of conduct under which Palestinian groups would not involve children in political or armed violence.

22. **Mr. Forshaw** (Australia) said that all aspects of the effects of armed conflict on children should be treated as a matter of priority. It would be helpful if all States became party to the Convention on the Rights of

the Child and its Optional Protocols. States should also ensure that international standards should be translated into tangible gains for children on the basis of appropriate national legislation. They could, moreover, provide financial support for UNICEF, which worked with children affected by armed conflict around the world. In Sri Lanka, for example, it provided community-based child protection; in East Timor, a child-protection officer worked with internally displaced persons; and, in Mindanao in the Philippines, UNICEF was working to ensure that children in conflict-affected areas had access to immunization and protection against abuse and exploitation. Lastly, States should put an end to impunity for crimes against children.

23. **Ms. Park** Enna (Republic of Korea) requested further details of the Special Representative's findings with regard to the use of violence — especially rape — against women and, in particular, girls in armed conflict.

24. **Mr. Akindele** (Nigeria) asked whether, in view of the many conflicts besetting the world, the Special Representative might be able to devote extra attention to the promotion of people like Ishmael Beah in order to deepen understanding of the phenomenon of child soldiers worldwide.

25. **Ms. Sulimani** (Sierra Leone), after paying a tribute to her compatriot Ishmael Beah, asked whether the Special Representative could give special consideration to the use of children as human shields in conflicts, a tactic adopted by warring parties in her country.

26. **Mr. Beah**, speaking in his capacity as an advocate for children in armed conflict, said, in response to the questions posed by the representatives of Gabon, Lebanon and Norway, that he welcomed the broader definition of the term "child soldier" that had been established. The definition should, however, be broadened still further to include all children affected by war and deprived of their right to be educated or live a normal life. Improving the lot of children in such situations was a global rather than a local issue, since the children of one generation were the leaders of the next; and their fate would have an impact on the rest of the world. The international community should therefore make every effort to find ways not only of supporting children currently affected by armed conflict but also of preventing such situations arising.

27. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said, with regard to the question by the observer for Palestine, that the situation had been complicated by the changing nature of the conflict, in which armed groups sometimes engaged in criminal activities. With the blurring of the line between combatants and civilians, the whole issue of terrorism and counter-terrorism would need to be adjusted in the light of international humanitarian law. With regard to the question by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, she said that a detailed report on the situation in the occupied territories was available on the website of her Office as an unofficial document submitted to the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. It would, in due course, appear in the official report to the Working Group. As for the question by the representative of Israel, she said that discussions with the Palestinian Authority and Israel continued. She commended the cooperation shown by all the parties during her visit to the occupied territories and hoped that further progress could be made.

28. With regard to the points raised by the representatives of Norway and Nigeria, she said there had been much discussion on what action could be taken to promote greater participation by young people in the General Assembly and in civil society. As for the questions by the representatives of the Russian Federation and Australia, she concurred with the view that all serious violations of children's rights should be given equal treatment. She hoped that the report of her Office to the Security Council Working Group in February 2008 would provide an opportunity for all States to rectify situations within their territories that gave rise to concern. The same applied to the question raised by the representative of the Republic of Korea concerning the use of sexual violence in armed conflict. She was particularly concerned about the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where there had been an acceleration of child abuse and sexual violence. Countries with particularly egregious records would be listed in an annex, the so-called "naming and shaming list". Lastly, in response to the point raised by the representative of Gabon, she said that she endeavoured to be an independent voice and advocate for children. If, however, she was to implement the mandate given her by Member States themselves, States must show more political will to support the implementation of that mandate.

29. **Ms. Veneman** (UNICEF), replying to the representative of Syria, said that a document detailing facts on the situation of children would be prepared for the December 2007 meeting on the five-year review of developments since the General Assembly special session on children. UNICEF's activities for children in areas of conflict focused on health care, including immunization; and on education, which not only contributed to the children's future well-being, but also gave them a sense of stability. UNICEF increasingly sought feedback from children in order to evaluate its activities. Reintegration programmes were critical and required appropriate mentors and a duration long enough to enable the children concerned to make the shift from what they had been through to a situation matching their needs. It was essential to work with the communities because they were often reluctant to welcome back children who had been part of belligerent forces. Lastly, the plight of boys and young men drafted as child soldiers should not divert attention from what girls and young women suffered in times of conflict. The rapes were acts of incredible violence.

30. **Yanghee Lee** (Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that working in two chambers had made it possible to reduce the time lapse between the submission of a State party's report and its consideration by her Committee from two years to approximately one year. Consideration of 38 reports was currently pending, and the Committee expected to receive many more during the next year in view of tens of overdue reports under both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Accordingly, her Committee was considering temporary measures that would help to reduce the backlog.

31. The Committee had adopted new reporting guidelines for the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography in October 2006 (CRC/C/OPSC/2) and for the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in October 2007 (CRC/C/OPAC/2). She urged States parties to abide by the new guidelines, which provided for additional information on measures for implementing legislative amendments and for identifying, recovering and reintegrating victims. Of the 10 General Comments formulated by her Committee, 5 had been adopted in the last two years. They related to the rights of children in juvenile

justice, the rights of children with disabilities, a child's right to protection from corporal punishment, child rights in early childhood and the treatment of unaccompanied children outside their country of origin. In order to proceed with the formal adoption of the guidelines for children without parental care by the General Assembly, her Committee called on States parties to discuss the guidelines among themselves. The guidelines in question had been prepared under the leadership of the Government of Brazil and the Group of Friendly States.

32. The Committee's follow-up activities to its concluding observations had included several subregional workshops, one of which had been organized in Costa Rica in October 2006. Participants had included Government representatives, parliamentarians, representatives of United Nations agencies, national human rights institutions and NGOs and media professionals from Central American countries, Mexico and Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries. A similar event had been scheduled to take place in Burkina Faso for the French-speaking countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Such workshops assessed the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, identified issues requiring attention and provided an opportunity to exchange good practices and propose implementation measures.

33. Referring to the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299), she said that adequate institutional capacity to follow up the report's recommendations was essential. Member States should recommend the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children.

34. Referring to the Machel study 10-year strategic review she said that the Committee remained committed to undertaking efforts within its mandate to protect children involved in armed conflict, notably through the review of reports by States parties under the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and under the Convention. She further pointed out that several States appearing on the agenda of the Security Council and also in the Secretary-General's 2007 report on children and armed conflict were parties to the Optional Protocol and that their reports were pending.

35. With regard to treaty body reform, the Committee fully supported the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to improve current practices with a view to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness and looked forward to participating in the annual Inter-Committee Meetings of the treaty bodies on a more regular basis.

36. The Committee expected that the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), to be conducted by the Human Rights Council as of 2008, would *inter alia* serve as a complementary follow-up mechanism for assessing the implementation of its own concluding observations.

37. **Mr. Mbaidjol** (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), referring to the report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/62/182), called on Member States to ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocols. OHCHR would continue to support the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its work. Referring to the Secretary-General's report on the girl child (A/62/297), he underscored that achieving the development goals for children, particularly girls, was contingent on, *inter alia*, women's empowerment and that a study by the World Health Organization (WHO) had confirmed that large numbers of girl children were subjected to domestic sexual abuse. Discrimination and violence against the girl child remained a global phenomenon despite progress achieved in that area. Treaty bodies monitored issues with a direct impact on the well-being of the girl child. Those issues included honour crimes, child marriages, early pregnancies, female genital mutilation, violence — including sexual abuse — in families and schools, vulnerability of girls with disabilities and trafficking in girls. With regard to special procedures, mention should be made of the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women; the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights aspects of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Lastly, the United Nations took steps to prevent and treat fistula with specific focus on the implementation of the Global Campaign to End Fistula, launched by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and its partners in 2003.

38. **Ms. Albuquerque** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process

countries and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that the world had made significant progress in ensuring the enjoyment of children's rights and that it was necessary to reinforce synergies with a view to protecting those rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been a source of inspiration at the national, regional and international levels. Its provisions had guided the formulation of national legislation in the areas of family law, child health and education, juvenile justice and the protection of children against violence, labour, sexual exploitation and armed conflict. Many countries had enacted comprehensive child rights codes or laws on various aspects of a child's life. The number of independent national institutions for children's rights — such as offices of ombudsmen and commissioners for children — had increased rapidly. A European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) had been established in 1997. The Convention was increasingly taken into account by national and international courts. The European Court of Human Rights used it as a key reference complementing the European Convention on Human Rights, and it had made an impact on numerous international legal instruments. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union explicitly recognized children's rights and reaffirmed the obligation to act in the best interest of children and to take their views into account. The European Union had adopted guidelines on children and armed conflict and was in the process of drawing up European guidelines on the rights of the child.

39. However, despite those achievements, children still faced injustice, violence, exploitation, poverty and insecurity. Many children, particularly girls, children in rural areas and children belonging to minorities, were victims of discrimination and exclusion. Children's and young people's participation in decisions that affected their lives was rarely built into local practices and national systems. Efforts in the last 18 years had placed children's rights on the map. Future action should focus on mainstreaming those rights into national and international agendas and policies.

40. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that children had increasingly become victims of violence, including domestic violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking and disappearance. The situation had been compounded by a lack of awareness

of children's rights and of gender and health issues. The Southern African Development Community member States abhorred violence against women and children and had enacted new laws and amended existing legislation to prohibit such violence and to provide maximum penalties for perpetrators. The legislative process had been undertaken in conjunction with action in the social and cultural fields to protect the rights of children and to work for change in traditional practices and attitudes which undermined the children's enjoyment of their rights.

41. SADC member States had integrated international undertakings into their national development programmes and poverty reduction strategies and were striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, convinced that an investment in children was consistent with the achievement of their development targets, member States had also committed themselves to a framework for moving towards the goals set out in the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly entitled "A world fit for children".

42. Apart from efforts undertaken under the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, the countries of the region had invested substantial resources in improving the accessibility of boys and girls to quality education through a partnership between Governments, parents and communities. Substantial progress had been made in the provision of primary education, net enrolment rates of which ranged between 71 and 95 per cent, with no gender gap at that level.

43. Nevertheless, equal access to opportunities for girls and boys remained a challenge in many member States. National plans of action needed better funding in order for proper implementation of programmes that gave special consideration to the situation of the girl child and to reducing her vulnerability to poverty, hunger, insecurity, sexual exploitation, abuse and exposure to HIV/AIDS.

44. The spread of HIV/AIDS and the level of malaria-related deaths among young children were issues of major concern. Health challenges had been addressed through the formulation of regional health policies and strategies aimed at achieving acceptable standards of health, notably through the 1999 SADC Protocol on Health. Programmes to implement national and regional policies and strategies focusing on prevention and care for persons infected with the

HIV/AIDS virus required additional resources in order to make a greater impact and to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic.

45. Several international conventions and policy guidelines, including the SADC Maseru declaration on HIV/AIDS, had been elaborated to protect and ensure the fulfilment of the rights of orphans and vulnerable children, and most SADC member States had adopted national policy instruments to support disadvantaged children. However, the level of resources at their disposal was far from adequate. He stressed that policies and commitments were meaningless without sufficient budgetary allocations to ensure that the rights promoted in the various instruments were indeed enjoyed.

46. He urged the partners of SADC member States to continue their support in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The implementation of all internationally agreed commitments, including pledges to provide sufficient resources to support global efforts with respect to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases, would make a difference. The issue of intellectual property rights was crucial to the production of generic drugs. If developing countries were allowed to produce cheap drugs more patients would be able to receive medicines on a sustainable basis.

47. SADC endorsed the recommendation on the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children. Such a mechanism would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system in protecting the rights of children and in harnessing resources for the improvement of the conditions of children worldwide. In conclusion, he said SADC would table a biennial draft resolution on the girl child, which he hoped would be adopted by consensus.

48. **Mr. Degia** (Barbados) speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM was deeply concerned about situations of violence against children worldwide and strongly condemned all such forms of violence. Several initiatives had been undertaken across the region to strengthen mechanisms for the protection of children. The promotion and protection of the rights of children deserved the utmost priority within the framework of international instruments and

in keeping with objectives for national, social and economic advancement.

49. The future of mankind largely depended on the enactment and implementation of policies to safeguard and nurture children. The international community had overwhelmingly supported the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the most powerful human rights instrument in that regard. Furthermore, the special session of the General Assembly and the adoption of its outcome document entitled “A world fit for children” had set out clear goals for the improvement of the situation of children and had provided an impetus for action. In the five intervening years, the increased focus on children had led to some progress in improving the situation of children. The report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the special session (A/62/259) provided an update on progress achieved in meeting the commitments established at the special session. Poverty, hunger, underdevelopment and the inability of many States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals were to a considerable extent linked to structural problems, the unfair and unequal international trading system and a lack of democracy and transparency in the international financial and economic system. Until the international community resolved those structural issues, the developing world would continue to trail behind the developed world in terms of social and economic development, and inevitably the children would suffer the most.

50. The Caribbean Community hoped for an accelerated rate of implementation of the decisions on increased funding for development, as adopted at the G8 meeting in Gleneagles and at the 2005 World Summit. CARICOM also urged developed countries to move positively towards the target of providing 0.7 per cent of gross national product in official development assistance (ODA). While developing countries held ultimate responsibility for their own development, national actions were not enough for them to participate fully in the global economy. Those actions must be complemented by support from the international community. Redressing structural imbalances in the world trading and economic systems was an absolute prerequisite to development. Children would continue to suffer if the processes of globalization and liberalization were not made more inclusive and if benefits were not distributed more equitably.

51. In recent years CARICOM had stressed the need for urgency in tackling the HIV/AIDS problem, which “A world fit for children” had identified as being of paramount importance to the international community. There was no doubt that the pandemic posed a threat of great magnitude to economic and social development worldwide. It was a startling reality that in spite of improvements in child mortality globally, the spread of HIV/AIDS had been reversing the gains accrued in some parts of the world. As small island developing States, CARICOM States were critically aware that HIV/AIDS could destroy the lives of its children and youth, and wished to reiterate the pressing need for more funds and attention to be devoted to the issue at the international level. Notwithstanding, CARICOM countries were well aware that HIV/AIDS must be tackled frontally and Governments in the region should continue to invest as much as possible in combating the pandemic. In an aggressive approach to counteract the effect of HIV/AIDS on children, member States had launched national programmes to reduce the rate of mother-to-child transmission, among other things. Public education programmes had been initiated throughout the region with the aid of UNICEF and through the initiative of several NGOs.

52. The Secretary-General had stressed the critical need to build partnerships and had highlighted the success of various regional partnerships in raising awareness of the rights of children and in improving their condition. CARICOM member States recognized the importance of such partnerships and had collaborated domestically and regionally through the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS.

53. Experts agreed that prevention was the key to minimizing new HIV infections, and CARICOM believed that the best means of combating the effects of HIV/AIDS on children was education, since it represented both an investment and a tool for development.

54. **Mr. Abdelhameed A. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that the final document of the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly, entitled “A world fit for children”, had compelled Governments to focus on promoting children’s rights, a trend strengthened further by the Millennium Declaration.

55. Much action was still needed to create awareness of the objectives of the United Nations study on violence against children, and States must be urged to

incorporate its text and spirit into their national legislation and establish related national plans. With regard to the independent expert's proposal for the appointment of a special representative on violence against children, however, further in-depth study of the idea would be preferable to a hasty decision.

56. With a view to meeting the commitments set out in the final document of the special session and moving with greater certainty towards the realization of the goals set for 2010 and 2015, much effort was needed, which meant stronger national partnerships with the organizations concerned.

57. The Sudan had adopted a framework document on child welfare for the period 2006 to 2015, entitled "A Sudan worthy of children", based on the document "A world fit for children". It reflected the Sudan's commitment to the objectives of the Millennium Declaration and regional and international instruments relating to children, as well as the country's Constitution, under which care of children was considered a religious, moral, national and humanitarian obligation. The document stressed health, educational, social and cultural services, to be assured for every child throughout the country within a framework of effective partnerships with the organizations of civil society.

58. The drafting of the document and all policies relating to children had been overseen by the National Council on Child Welfare, which was placed under the Office of the President of the Republic and provided the planning and supervisory framework for such matters, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Women and Children. Legislative efforts had culminated in the passage, in 2004, of the Uniform Code on Children, a landmark in children's rights legislation.

59. A children's parliament, which had held a successful first session, offered children a forum for expressing their views and concerns and prepared them for decision-making roles, political participation and the practice of democracy in the future.

60. The Sudan had made considerable progress in strengthening the rights of children through productive partnership with United Nations agencies and organizations, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, in the fields of nutrition, health, education and the spreading of a culture of peace. It looked forward to further cooperation in a climate of

peace in the south, the east and Darfur, and to taking up the challenges of consolidating that peace and carrying out projects for the rehabilitation of those affected by war, including children. It also looked forward to continued cooperation in the care and rehabilitation of street children and children whose parents were unknown.

61. His delegation expressed its deep concern at the ongoing tragic situation of children under foreign occupation in Palestine and the Syrian Golan and urged the international community to resolve that problem and work for a just and lasting peace and the departure of the occupier.

62. **Mr. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that Sri Lanka had introduced social policies and legislative measures to protect the rights of children. Consistent investment in promoting universal access at all levels of education had resulted in high rates of enrolment and literacy, and Sri Lanka was already on track to meeting the Millennium Development Goals on primary education, gender parity and reproductive health services. Net enrolment rates for both boys and girls at the primary level, the proportion of pupils reaching the fifth grade and the literacy rate for young persons between 15 and 24 years of age were all over 95 per cent.

63. Infant and maternal mortality in Sri Lanka had fallen to low levels that were comparable with those in some developed countries. The system of free education and public health care had brought considerable progress in social development.

64. However, the improvement in the lives of children had been undermined by their forced recruitment by a terrorist group which had been banned by Member States. In that context, his delegation appreciated the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and of UNICEF to protect the children of Sri Lanka from recruitment. His Government continued to work closely with the Office of the Special Representative and the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

65. In keeping with its commitment to a zero tolerance policy on child recruitment, the Government of Sri Lanka was doing its utmost to curb the practice, in accordance with the recommendations of the Working Group, and was fully committed to the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child

combatants. A committee had been established to initiate inquiries and to monitor investigations into the abduction of children. Within its mandate, the committee would make recommendations to ensure that those children had access to protection, rehabilitation and reintegration facilities. The committee would also propose training for the members of the security forces in order to familiarize them with Sri Lanka's international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

66. Terrorist groups operating in Sri Lanka had continued to recruit children and had not taken steps to release child recruits in spite of promises to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Sri Lanka had a strict legal framework for the protection of children against forced recruitment; however, terrorist groups functioned outside that framework, in blatant disregard for national and international norms. The forced recruitment of child soldiers undermined the efforts of the Government to secure their welfare. The main challenge, therefore, was to ensure that all children of Sri Lanka were protected from predation. He urged the international community to launch a process against the recruitment of children and to assist countries such as Sri Lanka in rehabilitating and reintegrating former recruits. The process of reintegration required that the Government should ensure a protective environment in which successful family reunification, access to health services, education, vocational training, income-generating activities and psychological care were provided for, with due consideration given to raising the standard of living of populations affected by armed conflict.

67. **Ms. Kurosaki** (Japan) said that child abuse was considered one of the most serious human rights violations and that recognition of the importance of children's rights was rapidly growing in Japan. Laws on the prevention of child abuse and on child welfare had been enacted to introduce a system that ensured safe conditions for child care. The concept of security was based on the belief that every person was entitled to a healthy, dignified and fulfilling life.

68. Pursuant to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in cooperation with other Member States and international organizations, Japan had provided \$2.2 million to a project in Bhutan on literacy, income security and employment for

vulnerable persons, including women and children, which was being implemented by various United Nations funds and programmes. In that context, she expressed Japan's appreciation for the leading role played by UNICEF in following up the Secretary-General's study on violence against children.

69. Japan was greatly concerned about the situation of children in countries affected by armed conflict. Although progress had been made in recent years in combating impunity, through the application of international standards for the protection of children, much remained to be done. She commended the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, particularly with respect to the preparation of reports based on field visits. Japan was keenly aware that children caught in armed conflict suffered severe psychological, economic and social problems, and were often deprived of the right to proper education, health care, water and food. Japan strongly believed that the issue of children and armed conflict should be a priority for the international community and should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. For its part, Japan intended to pursue its close cooperation with other Member States, UNICEF and other actors, including NGOs. Japan would do its utmost to create a better future for children, and looked forward to its participation in the high-level meeting scheduled for December 2007. That forum would provide a fitting opportunity to review the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action, adopted at the twenty-seventh special session, and to renew the commitment of the international community to achieving a world fit for children.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.