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Chairperson: Mr. Penke (Latvia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 69: Promotion and protection of human rights (*continued*) (A/64/81)

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (*continued*) (A/64/159, A/64/160, A/64/170, A/64/171, A/64/175, A/64/181, A/64/186, A/64/187, A/64/188, A/64/209, A/64/211 and Corr.1, A/64/213 and Corr.1, A/64/214, A/64/216, A/64/219, A/64/226, A/64/255, A/64/256, A/64/265, A/64/272, A/64/273, A/64/279, A/64/289, A/64/290, A/64/293, A/64/304, A/64/320, A/64/333)

(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (*continued*) (A/64/318, A/64/319 and Corr.1, A/64/224, A/64/328, A/64/334 and A/64/357)

1. **Mr. Quinlan** (Australia) said that since coming into office two years earlier, his Government had made genuine progress in the promotion, protection and realization of human rights at home and abroad. Domestic achievements included a national apology to indigenous Australians and a \$5.6 billion investment to address indigenous disadvantage; the National Human Rights Consultation, and the resulting report, which was being considered by the Government. Internationally, the Government had taken steps to meet existing international human rights obligations and to assume further obligations under relevant treaties.

2. Faced with global food, debt and financial crises, the international community must acknowledge the importance of economic, social and cultural rights and the need to make development accessible to all. Australia looked forward to using its seat on the Economic and Social Council to promote those fundamental rights and adherence to treaties that supported their implementation. It also supported efforts to establish a composite United Nations agency for women, as gender equality was fundamental to the achievement of economic development.

3. Recognizing the need to address discrimination against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity, his Government had introduced reforms to enable same-sex couples and their children to have the same entitlements as opposite-sex de facto couples under Commonwealth law.

4. Australia opposed the death penalty and reiterated its support for a moratorium on executions. Countries retaining the death penalty should abolish it, as Togo had done. His Government also opposed the use of corporal punishment as a criminal sanction.

5. His delegation welcomed the steps taken by many States to improve human rights situations, including the constructive approach to the universal periodic review of small island States such as Vanuatu, Tonga and Tuvalu. The launch of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights was another promising initiative.

6. His country had become an early contributor to the recently established United Nations trust fund for a memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, recognizing the importance of examining past injustices.

7. Unfortunately, some countries had failed to live up to their human rights obligations. In that connection, Australia called upon the regime in Fiji to withdraw the draconian public emergency regulations it had imposed that spring, and to hold free and fair elections. It also deplored the violence that had followed the June presidential elections in Iran, and urged the Iranian Government to ensure transparency in its judicial system and to investigate fully reports of torture, rape and death in detention. While condemning the conviction of Aung San Suu Kyi on spurious charges in August, Australia welcomed the recent contact between her and the Myanmar Government, and called for democratic reform and reconciliation in that country. His Government would continue to monitor closely Sri Lanka's treatment of internally displaced persons and its efforts to institute political reform. Lastly, he expressed concern at reports stating that the planned visit to Zimbabwe by the Special Rapporteur on torture had been cancelled at the request of the Government.

8. The international community must use the forthcoming review of the Human Rights Council to assess the effectiveness of the international human rights system. While encouraged by aspects of its work, Australia believed that the Council could do more to respond to urgent human rights challenges.

9. **Mr. Thaug Tun** (Myanmar) said that the artificial distinction between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural

rights on the other must be eliminated. It was a sad reflection of the times that some powerful nations had been resorting to economic sanctions to pressure developing countries, as unilateral coercive measures were inimical to the cause of human rights.

10. The universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council had been designed to be universal, transparent, objective and non-selective. Against that backdrop, it was troubling that some countries continued to single out others for alleged human rights violations. The assessments of the human rights situation in Myanmar made by the United States of America, New Zealand, Japan, Australia, and by Sweden on behalf of the European Union, were patently subjective. While every country had the right to bring its concerns to the attention of the international community, it must be done objectively and with respect for the right of countries to have their situations reviewed fairly. The universal periodic review mechanism provided the best means of doing so.

11. Myanmar opposed selectivity and double standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had also expressed deep concern over the practice of selective adoption of country-specific resolutions in the General Assembly.

12. Despite the significant progress achieved in the previous decade, his country still faced formidable challenges and stood at an important juncture, as it prepared to hold multiparty elections in 2010. Undue external pressure on Myanmar could in no way assist its people to achieve their aspirations.

13. **Mr. Ramafole** (Lesotho) said that his Government was in the process of incorporating international human rights instruments into domestic law. At the regional level, Lesotho had undergone the African Peer Review, which included a human rights component. Lesotho looked forward to evaluation by the Human Rights Council's universal periodic review mechanism in 2010.

14. In Lesotho, 70 per cent of the population was rural and relied on subsistence agriculture. Irregular climactic conditions over the two previous cropping seasons had increased the vulnerability of the rural poor, who made up about 83 per cent of the rural population. Despite increasing food insecurity and shortfalls in assistance, the Government had resolved to revitalize the agricultural sector by adopting

mitigation strategies including extending irrigation infrastructure throughout the country and producing home-grown seeds to reduce dependence on outside sources. Furthermore, cooperation between the Government and its development partners continued to be strengthened, with a view to establishing sustainable agricultural development programmes for mountain areas and promoting development opportunities, such as viable income-generating projects for the rural poor. The international community should redouble its efforts to guarantee the right to food through coherent food security policies, investment in sustainable agriculture programmes and equitable and broad-based sharing of resources.

15. With regard to human rights and extreme poverty, social protection went hand in hand with the right to health and education. His Government's social protection policies included subsidized and free health-care services, along with free primary and secondary education. While development partners and the international community had contributed to the implementation of Government programmes, more support was needed in order to address other challenges, such as improving the quality of education and ensuring that Lesotho's social protection programmes withstood the impact of the global financial and economic crisis.

16. **Ms. Polo** (Togo) said that her Government, out of a desire to establish a sound justice system in which judicial errors were kept to a minimum and human rights were guaranteed, had recently adopted a law abolishing the death penalty. No correlation existed between the incidence of crime and the application of the death penalty, which had long been considered an inhumane, degrading measure by the community of nations. While death sentences had been pronounced in Togo in recent years, Togo had been a de facto abolitionist State since 1978, when the last execution had taken place. The Togolese Constitution stipulated that the State must guarantee the right to life of every person on its territory, a duty that could now be fulfilled. Togo urged all States that continued to apply the death penalty, which had never delivered the results expected of it, to consider doing away with it.

17. **Mr. Normandin** (Canada) said that the respect for and implementation of human rights norms remained a challenge for all countries. However, when Member States demonstrated no will or took no action to protect human rights, the international community

had an obligation to express its views and to use the appropriate tools at its disposal to prevent human rights abuses.

18. Recent events demonstrated that human rights abuses were likely to occur following constitutional or electoral crises and that women's human rights were particularly at risk. In Guinea, the use of violence against peaceful citizens and sexual violence against women were wholly unacceptable. His delegation called for a return to constitutional order in Guinea and respect for the basic rights of its citizens, and commended the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States on their regional leadership on human rights issues. In Iran, the human rights situation had deteriorated further in the aftermath of the June 2009 elections. Iran must ensure that due process was respected for protesters, academics and journalists who had been detained, in accordance with its international obligations, and launch a transparent investigation into post-election allegations of human rights violations. Canada also condemned the human rights violations that had occurred in Honduras as a consequence of the June coup d'état, and called for the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in that country, as well as for all sides to support national dialogue. In Burma, the military refused to recognize elections and persisted in preventing democracy. The regime must release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and allow all citizens to participate in free and fair elections in 2010. Lastly, Canada remained concerned at the human rights situation in Belarus, where the modest steps that had preceded the 2008 parliamentary elections had not led to further progress.

19. Noting the persistent disregard for individual rights and freedoms in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Canada called on that country to facilitate the work of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including by accepting a country visit at the earliest opportunity. His Government also called for an end to human rights abuses in Sudan, where ongoing insecurity and inter-ethnic violence had claimed over 2,000 lives that year. In such situations, the international community must continue to promote and protect the important work of human rights defenders, who, along with the media, often operated in difficult and hostile conditions. Attacks on Sri Lankan media representatives had increased in recent

years, while the perpetrators of those crimes had operated with impunity. The human rights of internally displaced persons held in Sri Lankan camps also remained of serious concern.

20. Domestically, Canada had developed institutions to assist it in pursuing its commitments and addressing its own challenges. At the bilateral level, his Government had engaged in dialogue and technical cooperation with several countries in support of their efforts to promote human rights. At the multilateral level, Canada had strived vigorously to strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery.

21. **Ms. Roca-Hachem** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO fully incorporated the principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms into its work to promote cultural diversity and education, which was the key to fostering a culture of peace. The right of all people to quality, lifelong education was particularly relevant to girls and women in developing countries, as well as minorities, migrants and marginalized peoples. UNESCO would draw upon the forthcoming Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report in continuing to provide Member States with policy advice and technical support to bring about educational reform and to meet the Education for All goals.

22. The principles of human rights, tolerance, diversity and respect must be part of every curriculum. In that connection, UNESCO conducted teacher training programmes and produced applicable tools, such as the Guidelines on Intercultural Education. UNESCO was also a strong advocate of the protection of languages, in particular through multilingual education, a matter of crucial importance to indigenous and minority communities. Language was a fundamental component of identity, and the freedom to learn and express oneself in one's mother tongue was essential to sustain linguistic and cultural diversity.

23. The UNESCO World Report, launched in October 2009, provided a coherent vision of how cultural diversity was beneficial to the action of the international community and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). UNESCO had a number of standard-setting instruments aimed at safeguarding cultural diversity, including the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. In addition, UNESCO was pleased to be the lead agency for the

International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures in 2010. Intercultural dialogue must be bolstered to foster mutual understanding and respect among peoples and to strengthen positive social integration. UNESCO was also organizing events and commissioning projects aimed at promoting inter-religious dialogue.

24. Its work in education for sustainable development included the use of new technologies to further science, technical and vocational education and training, and the development of lifelong learning. The integration of culture into national development policies and regional processes should be effectively pursued. Cultural considerations in no way diminished the human rights obligations of States; rather, investing in education and cultural diversity would strengthen international approaches to sustainable development and the effective exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

25. **Ms. Filip** (Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that the objective of the IPU human rights programme was to strengthen parliaments' capacities to promote and protect human rights. IPU had consistently advocated the establishment of specialized parliamentary human rights committees which could ensure that human rights became a concern for all other parliamentary bodies and act as parliamentary focal points for monitoring States' compliance with their obligations. Effective scrutiny was important, as the treaty bodies' recommendations or concluding observations invariably required both legislative action and budgetary resources. Parliamentarians should provide input for national reports and be included in the national delegations to the meetings of the treaty bodies.

26. Working in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), IPU was helping parliaments to familiarize themselves with the human rights treaty body system. The results of activities in francophone African parliaments had been very encouraging. To ensure the effectiveness of the universal periodic review mechanism, parliamentarians should help to draft national reports, which should be debated in parliament before being finalized. National delegations to the Human Rights Council should include parliamentarians and parliament should discuss the outcome of the review. IPU would follow up on those recommendations.

27. Thirty years previously, IPU had set up a special Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to examine communications regarding violations of those rights. At its most recent session, the Committee had examined 60 cases concerning 250 members of parliament throughout the world and involving a wide range of human rights violations. In Madagascar, Parliament had been suspended in March 2009 and some members had been arrested and ill-treated. Some had been sentenced and others had arrest warrants pending, in flagrant disregard for the Maputo agreement of August 2009 which required the annulment of all politically motivated prosecutions. In Niger, Parliament had been dissolved for refusing to grant the incumbent Head of State an extension of his mandate and its members were being prosecuted on dubious charges.

28. Violations of the human rights of parliamentarians invariably originated in a violation of freedom of expression. Sometimes the threat came from political parties which were suppressing criticisms within their ranks. In some countries, parliamentarians lost their mandate if they failed to vote along party lines, resigned from the party or were expelled. Those dangerous developments corroded a parliament's ability to represent the people. There should be concern that political life was widely perceived as a closed space with little room for dissent and real consideration of alternative policy options. Parliamentarians should be able to speak freely without fear. It was important to foster greater political tolerance among citizens and political leaders through education, communication and the upholding of the highest standards of ethics in public life. IPU would continue to provide support to the United Nations human rights machinery and would continue to defend the human rights of members of parliament, looking to the United Nations and its Member States to assist it in that task.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

29. **Mr. Şen** (Turkey) responding to the unfounded allegations made by the representative of Cyprus at the thirty-first meeting, said that efforts to erase the memory of the international community were doomed to failure. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus had first been deployed on Cyprus in 1964, rather than 1974, to stop the Greek Cypriots' attacks on the Turkish Cypriots. The Greek Cypriot policy of

intimidation, force and expulsion had forced 180,000 Turkish Cypriots to live in enclaves covering only 3 per cent of the island's total area and from 1963 to 1974 the Turkish Cypriots had endured siege-like conditions. Any interested delegations could visit the United Nations library to consult reports from that period documenting Greek Cypriot atrocities.

30. The representative of Greece had referred to "invasion" and "occupation", as if they had suddenly occurred in 1974, forgetting the experiences of the period from 1963 to 1974 and the ouster of Turkish Cypriots from the Government, legislature and judiciary of Cyprus in 1963, at gunpoint. Nor had he mentioned the notorious "Akritas Plan" of ethnic cleansing, drafted by the Greek Cypriot leadership of the time and designed to deprive Turkish Cypriots of constitutional safeguards in order to realize enosis (annexation of the island to Greece). The Greek Cypriots had failed to force the Turkish Cypriots off the island, but they succeeded in hijacking the State of Cyprus in 1963.

31. In 1974, the military regime in Greece had instigated a military coup to annex the island and Turkey had intervened as a Guarantor Power, acting within its rights and responsibilities under the 1960 Agreements. The Turkish intervention, rather than the beginning of the problem, had been an inevitable consequence of nearly 20 years of enosis-oriented policies and acts perpetrated by the Greek Cypriots.

32. In 2004, the Turkish Cypriots had contributed to a solution by voting overwhelmingly in favour of the United Nations Settlement Plan. In the report of former Secretary-General Annan to the Security Council (S/2004/437), the Plan was described as the solution itself rather than a mere blueprint. Yet the Turkish Cypriots continued to live in unacceptable isolation and disenfranchisement imposed not by the United Nations but by the so-called recognized "State". The same report had underlined that efforts towards ending the restrictions did not contradict Security Council resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984) and stated that the Turkish Cypriot vote had undone whatever rationale might have existed for pressuring and isolating them. The hope had been expressed in paragraph 93 of the report that members of the Security Council could give a strong lead to all States to cooperate bilaterally to eliminate unnecessary restrictions and barriers that had the effect of isolating the Turkish Cypriots and impeding their development,

deeming such a move consistent with Security Council resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984).

33. **Mr. Stavrou** (Cyprus) regretted that the representative of Turkey had once again used false accusations and distortions in an attempt to divert attention from the essence of the problem, for which Turkey was fully responsible. The division of Cyprus, with all its traumatic consequences, persisted because the Turkish army continued to occupy a large part of an independent sovereign country, maintaining an illegal secessionist entity that had repeatedly been condemned by Security Council resolutions. He would not respond to all the allegations made — his delegation's statement at the thirty-first meeting and the decisions of various international bodies, including the European Court of Human Rights and the Security Council, spoke for themselves.

34. A country serving as a non-permanent member of the Security Council was occupying over a third of a country that was a United Nations Member State and a member of the European Union, to which the occupying country wished to accede, thereby undermining the unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus and failing to comply with Security Council resolutions. It was a paradox and also illegal.

35. The Cypriots must find a solution to end the occupation and reunite the island and its people, restoring and safeguarding the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots. The solution should be based on Security Council resolutions, high-level agreements, the decision of the European Court of Human Rights and the values and principles on which the European Union had been founded. Full conformity with human rights standards for all the people of Cyprus should be an integral element of any settlement, in order to achieve a just, comprehensive, functional and sustainable solution. If Turkey really wished to resolve the issue of Cyprus, it should withdraw all occupying troops from the island and let Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots live together in harmony and peace.

36. **Mr. Okuda** (Japan), in response to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's repeated allegations, said that since the end of the Second World War, Japan had taken many opportunities to express sincere apologies and had also provided compensation to the "comfort women" through the Asian Women's Fund. Over the same period, Japan had conducted talks

with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the issue of the settlement of the unfortunate past as part of the process of normalization talks to establish diplomatic relations, and would continue to do so. In the previous month, the Prime Minister of Japan had clearly stated that Japan sought to normalize relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration, through the comprehensive resolution of the outstanding issues of concern, including the abduction, nuclear and missile issues, as well as by sincerely moving beyond the unfortunate past. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should take concrete steps to advance normalization talks.

37. It was not possible to justify ongoing violations of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by evoking issues from the past. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should heed the international community's concern and face the reality of its serious human rights situation. It should address a number of issues immediately, including protection of the right to food, ending the punishment of those who returned to the country and ending public executions.

38. **Mr. Zoumanigui** (Guinea) said that Guinea was a party to all international human rights instruments and made every effort to comply with its obligations in that regard. In response to references to Guinea made by the representatives of the European Union and Canada, he said that the National Council for Democracy and Development had taken power in Guinea on 23 December 2008 without bloodshed, following the death from natural causes of President Conte.

39. Their reasons for taking power, the goals established and the efforts to achieve them had been welcomed by the population and appreciated by the international community. An ongoing political dialogue between the Government and political and social actors in the country, on several occasions with the participation of the International Contact Group on Guinea, had led to consensus on the transition timetable. The legislative elections were to take place in December 2009 and the presidential elections in January 2010, with a second round if necessary in March 2010.

40. The September events had been organized mainly to protest against the possible candidacy of the current President, who had not yet announced whether he

would stand for election. The unfortunate consequences of those events had plunged the people of Guinea into mourning. The President had conveyed his condolences to the victims' families, decreed two days of reflection in their memory and taken action to assist the injured. He had supported the designation of the President of Burkina Faso as mediator by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and had suggested the establishment of a national and international commission of inquiry under the auspices of the United Nations and the formation of a Government of National Unity. During the recent visit of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs to Guinea, the Guinean authorities had reaffirmed their willingness to cooperate with an international commission of inquiry. The mediator and the commission should coordinate their work for setting up a Government of National Unity to prepare for elections and a return to constitutional order.

41. Consideration of human rights issues should exclude politicization, selectivity and double standards, as only dialogue and cooperation could lead to conclusive results.

42. **Ms. AlShahail** (Saudi Arabia), in response to a statement made by the European Union on 27 October, said that promotion and protection of human rights was a key element of governance in her country. The Basic Law had adequate provisions to ensure protection of the human rights of all citizens, including women and minorities. Saudi Arabian society was conservative and was developing in line with the rest of the world, while maintaining a sense of pride in its history, culture and religion. It did not need guidance from anyone in its pursuit of modernism and had made considerable progress with women's rights, in the belief that they were important for the nation's development. Progress was driven by Saudi Arabia's own history, rather than by external forces. Her generation of women were participating in all areas of Saudi culture and assuming their rightful place in contemporary Saudi society.

43. Saudi Arabia had done and would do all it could to fulfil its international human rights obligations. Unfortunately, the European Union was giving lessons on fundamental human rights to developing countries, despite the widely documented and growing trends in all European Union countries of racism and racial and religious discrimination, especially in the form of Islamophobia. The European Union should adopt a balanced approach by highlighting the continuation of

grave human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and occupied East Jerusalem in particular, by Israel, the occupying Power.

44. **Ms. Bhoroma** (Zimbabwe), in response to the statement made by the representative of Australia, said that her Government had not cancelled the visit of the Special Rapporteur on torture to her country, but had postponed it in view of other pressing commitments. A meeting of the Southern African Development Community would have coincided with the visit and prevented adequate attention being devoted to it. New dates for his visit would be announced as soon as possible. All delegations, and especially Australia, should gather sufficient and accurate information before pontificating to the Committee.

45. **Mr. Mamdouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), in reply to remarks made by the delegation of Canada, said that the baseless allegations made against Iran were a by-product of the Canadian Government's domestic policies and its abuse of United Nations human rights mechanisms. They lacked credibility, reliability and objectivity in both substance and procedure. Canada, which had arrogated to itself global leadership in human rights advocacy, could not be proud of its own human rights record.

46. The reports of treaty bodies and stakeholders raised concerns about continued cases of human rights violations in Canada, with numerous references to the Government's non-compliance with its international obligations and increasing discrimination against indigenous people, aboriginal women, migrants, Muslims, Arabs and Afro-Canadians. The Human Rights Committee and the Committee against Torture had expressed their concern at Canada's reluctance to consider their requests and recommendations, while the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had strongly reiterated that Canada should implement recommendations dating back to its second and third periodic reports.

47. Since 11 September 2001, Muslim and Arab communities had continuously felt victimized. The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance had emphasized that the resurgence of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia required vigilant attention and the Human Rights Committee had recommended that Canada eliminate discrimination on the basis of religion and belief. The OHCHR compilation set out

the concerns of some treaty bodies and NGOs regarding the situation of First Nations and other vulnerable groups.

48. **Mr. Pak Tok Hun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), in response to the statements made by Japan the previous day and its recent statement in exercise of the right of reply, said that the relations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan were those of a victim and assailant. Japan had committed numerous human rights violations against the Korean people in the past and was now attempting to mislead public opinion on the settlement of the abduction issue or normalization of relations, while leaving aside the issue of redressing its past criminal acts.

49. The core issue and the main reason for the lack of relations between the two countries was not the abduction issue, but Japan's hostile policy and refusal to make reparations for past crimes. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea could accept the continuing lack of normal relations, but reparation for past crimes was a responsibility that Japan could not evade, either in legal terms or from a moral and historical point of view. The money for the so-called Women's Fund had been provided by women's NGOs in Japan and, as far as he was aware, the former "comfort women" had refused to accept the money. The crimes had been committed by the Japanese Government and military of that time and should therefore be redressed by the State, and not by NGOs. If the payments made through the Women's Fund had already resolved the issue, he wondered why so many NGOs, former "comfort women" and international organizations were calling for Japan to address it. Empty words were unacceptable. Practical measures were needed, with a sincere apology and proper compensation. It had taken over 60 years for Japan to acknowledge State involvement in the hideous crime of sexual slavery of 200,000 Korean women. The international community was waiting to see how many more decades it would take for Japan to redress that crime against humanity.

50. **Mr. Thaug Tun** (Myanmar), in response to comments made earlier by the representative of Sweden speaking on behalf of the European Union and by representatives of the United States of America, New Zealand, Japan, Australia and Canada regarding the human rights situation in his country, said that Myanmar opposed selectivity and double standards in

the promotion and protection of human rights. The use of human rights as a political instrument, including the selective targeting of individual countries, was contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, which placed human rights in the context of international cooperation.

51. It was unfortunate that the comments made on the human rights situation in Myanmar had been based on information from anti-Government groups. Myanmar fully respected the right of any country to hold an opinion and to bring its concerns to the attention of the international community, but it should do so in an objective manner, respecting Myanmar's right to an equitable and fair review of the situation. The universal periodic review mechanism was the best means of doing so. Efforts to promote and protect human rights could make significant headway only if they were based on a cooperative and balanced approach, particularly in the contemporary world of diverse political, economic and social systems.

52. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan) repudiated the baseless allegations made by the representative of Canada regarding the violation of women's human rights in Sudan. The claims were a distortion of reality and neglected the significant advances made in women's rights in his country. Sudanese women had assumed leadership roles in all areas of society, in addition to having been granted the right to vote before their counterparts in many developed countries. In addition, Sudanese traditional values promoted respect for women.

53. His Government was willing to cooperate with all United Nations human rights officials, and its efforts to achieve peace were widely recognized, particularly after having ended the longest-running war in Africa. He called on Canada to urge fellow donor countries to honour the commitments made at the Oslo Donor's Conference on Sudan, as well as to pursue talks with European countries harbouring Sudanese rebel leaders who, contrary to the position taken by the Sudanese Government, rejected all regional and international peace initiatives.

54. Canada must either approach issues of peace and development more constructively, ignoring outdated or erroneous information, or it must turn away from Sudan altogether and refrain from making statements that hindered the Sudanese people's progress towards peace and well-being. He called on Canada to work

towards improving its own human rights situation, particularly with regard to migrants living in its territory.

55. **Mr. Okuda** (Japan), responding to the comments made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, said that Japan had been facing up to its past with sincerity since the end of the Second World War. The situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, however, posed a clear threat to the lives of its own people. According to paragraph 72 of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (A/64/224): "The above analysis points to an array of rights and freedoms which are violated egregiously by the authorities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on a daily basis, much to the pain and suffering of the ordinary population. The violations are evidently widespread, systematic and abhorrent in their impact and implications. The freedoms from want, from fear, from discrimination, from persecution and from exploitation are regrettably transgressed with a sense of impunity on the part of those authorities, in an astonishing setting of abuse after abuse, multiplied incessantly." His delegation once again urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to respond honestly to the concerns of the international community, face the reality of its serious human rights situation and take concrete action to improve the situation.

56. The abduction issue was one of the core issues, together with the nuclear weapons and missile issues, to be addressed in order to make progress in normalization talks. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea only had to carry out the promises made in the course of the previous year's discussion. He hoped to see a positive attitude in that regard.

57. **Mr. Pak Tok Hun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that Japan continued to make groundless allegations while evading its responsibility for grave human rights violations.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.