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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 12th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on

*Chair:* Mr. Al-Shami (Vice-Chair) ..... (Yemen)

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*In the absence of Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Mr. Al-Shami (Yemen), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

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

**Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (continued)**  
(A/65/336)

**(a) Advancement of women (continued)** (A/65/38, A/65/208, A/65/209, A/65/218, A/65/268, A/65/334 and A/65/354-S/2010/466)

**(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (continued)** (A/65/204 and A/C.3/65/L.7)

1. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) stated that the Government of Bangladesh considered it a point of honour to promote the empowerment of women. In the course of her two terms of office, the Prime Minister, Ms. Sheikh Hasina, had launched the first national policy for women's development and a Plan of Action incorporating the objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and recently she had adopted further measures to advance gender equality. Since poverty eradication and the empowerment of women were inextricably linked, those twin objectives had been taken into account in development planning. Furthermore, gender issues had been taken into account in many public policies.

2. As a result of the country's considerable investment in the education of women, gender parity had been reached in primary and secondary education, as required under Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time, the Government was striving to eradicate poverty, particularly among women, by implementing a whole series of social programmes, offering vocational training courses and lending support to small and medium-sized enterprises.

3. The economic empowerment of women had made their political empowerment possible: women were not only well represented in all professions; they also headed major ministries and comprised approximately 19 per cent of parliamentarians.

4. The year 2010 marked the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), to which Bangladesh attached considerable importance, because peacekeeping operations could contribute significantly to women's security and well-being in conflict and in post-conflict situations. Gender

issues had been taken into account in United Nations peacekeeping operations and a Bangladesh police unit comprised entirely of women had been deployed in June 2010 to the Mission in Haiti.

5. The Government was also combating the transnational crime of trafficking in women and children. In addition, it had adopted a number of measures to ensure treatment for women suffering from obstetric fistula and their reintegration in society.

6. Bangladesh had discharged its international duty by submitting its report, in January 2010, to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Finally, he deplored the insufficient funding for UN-Women and recalled that the countries concerned could do very little without increased international cooperation, resource mobilization and global partnerships. The developed countries should therefore honour their commitments regarding Official Development Assistance, which were set forth in the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. The resources provided would finance activities related to the empowerment of women which would have significant beneficial social and economic impacts.

7. **Mr. Mnisi** (Swaziland) said that it was impossible to ensure sustainable development and social justice without granting women the right to equal participation in political, social and economic spheres. His Government had therefore committed itself to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, with a view to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was also striving to protect women's human rights. The Constitution of Swaziland prohibited discrimination and proclaimed the rights and freedoms of women. The country was also a party to the principal human rights instruments promoting gender equality and respect for women's rights. The Council of Ministers had adopted a national policy on gender equality, which aimed, on the one hand, to implement, at the local, regional and national levels, development projects that took gender considerations into account and, on the other, to establish a legal framework according ample importance to that matter while allocating sufficient resources to do so. In addition, Swaziland was participating in African Women's Decade activities.

8. The Government had committed itself to improving the health of women and girls and to that

end had adopted a wide range of measures, above all on issues relating to maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health, and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. Despite all that progress and cooperation from entities such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the country continued to grapple with poverty and HIV/AIDS. Women bore a triple burden: as persons living with HIV, as mothers of infected children, and as persons looking after sick partners, parents or orphans. Swaziland lacked the resources needed to help them and appealed for strengthened cooperation with development partners, as the economic and energy crises, as well as food insecurity and climate change, threatened to undermine the progress made. At the same time, the country condemned violence against women and was currently promulgating legislation to address that issue. Swaziland also recognized that trafficking in human beings constituted a serious challenge that called for a response from the international community. In that connection, he welcomed the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which would accelerate efforts to prosecute the perpetrators and protect the victims of trafficking. He hoped that the special trust fund established for that purpose would soon be operational and recalled that Swaziland had also played a part in the adoption by the Southern African Development Community of the Strategic Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

9. **Mr. Şen** (Turkey) said that considerable progress had been made in the world with respect to the advancement of women, protection of their rights and gender equality. Thanks to the laws passed against gender-based discrimination, women were gradually taking their rightful place in the social, economic and political fabric in their countries. However, it remained true that, 10 years after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and despite progress made regarding the protection and promotion of women's rights in conflict situations, much implementation work still needed to be done and more effective measures were needed to protect and empower women.

10. Turkey had embarked on reforms over the past 10 years in favour of gender equality, a principle that the country had written into its Constitution. Turkey had also recognized the primacy of international agreements over its domestic legislation. As a Party to

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in 2010 Turkey had presented its sixth periodic report on the subject. The Constitutional reform adopted in 2010 following a referendum had had the effect of bolstering human rights and fundamental freedoms and, in particular, of instituting "positive" discrimination, which, in that context, did not contravene the principle of equality. Turkey was thus in a better position to discharge its obligations under human rights conventions. The country had also striven to mainstream gender equality and had established a parliamentary commission to oversee the implementation of measures adopted to that end. It had enacted several action plans geared especially to ensuring gender equality, notably with respect to access to education and employment and to combating violence against women. At the same time, countless projects and campaigns on topics related to women had been launched to increase public awareness. Turkey had also hosted several conferences on women's issues in order to raise international awareness and had invited all interested parties to an international meeting on women to be held in Istanbul on 5 and 6 November 2010.

11. **Mr. Herczyński** (Poland) stressed that gender equality was essential for the well-being of the family, the consolidation of democracy, social justice and cohesion and sustainable economic growth. The Polish Government was endeavouring to promote the advancement of women by adopting equal opportunity measures with respect to employment and raising awareness in society. Gender equality measures should be regarded as a long-term investment, rather than a short-term liability. Finally, while supporting the statement made by the Observer for the European Union, he recalled that Poland did not interpret any reference in that statement to reproductive and sexual health rights as constituting encouragement for the promotion of abortion.

12. **Ms. Štiglic** (Slovenia) said that UN-Women should strengthen the practical application of the principles of gender equality and empowerment of women in the world. While underscoring the work of the Secretary-General to promote the elimination of discrimination against women, she said that much remained to be done in that area, in law and in practice. She welcomed the establishment by the Human Rights Council of a working group to examine that issue and encouraged all States to cooperate with it. Gender

equality and the empowerment of women were essential for promoting development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Recalling the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which acknowledged the role of women in peace, security and prosperity, she deplored the fact that women continued to be victims of violence, especially sexual violence, during and after armed conflicts, and called for the adoption of new measures to implement all the provisions of the resolution. Indicators for monitoring implementation of the resolution should be adopted at the international level and consistent efforts should be made to fight against impunity for the perpetrators of those crimes. At the national level, Slovenia would soon adopt an action plan to implement the resolution. In conclusion, she emphasized that 2010 had been a special year in the sense that numerous mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women had been put in place and she trusted that such a positive dynamic would be followed by efficient implementation.

13. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) pointed out that in 2009 his country had commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the National Union of Eritrean Women, which had been established, during the struggle for independence, with a view to achieving gender equality. Later, the Government had given it the task of promoting the empowerment of women. Public discussions had been organized in different parts of the country to take stock of those 30 years of efforts and to identify the political, social and economic measures that were needed to take the process further. Those discussions had revealed a greater awareness of women's rights and the need for women's empowerment. While their status in economic and social spheres, and in the political arena, had improved considerably, compared to that of their parents, it remained true that women and girls shouldered heavy responsibilities in their families and communities which hindered them from achieving their full potential.

14. For that reason, it had been stressed that improving legislation would not suffice. Rather, concerted action was needed to correct the root causes of gender imbalances. Apart from improved coordination and more robust political will, a particularly promising approach appeared to be the replication on a larger scale of projects which, albeit modest, had been tried and tested on the ground. Thus, the "Donkey and Canvas Project", which had been

implemented in rural areas, had made it possible to involve boys in tasks traditionally assigned to girls, such as fetching water, thereby freeing girls to attend school. Microcredit programmes had also been tried and found to be useful. More generally, the participation of women at all stages of development projects, from planning to implementation, guaranteed better results.

15. Eritrea was committed to the full implementation of its national gender policy, which was consistent with the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. However, additional support would be required for capacity-building at every level.

16. Finally, Eritrea was committed to eliminating obstetric fistula by 2011, by making free health care universal. It had also stepped up its efforts to put an end to female genital mutilation.

17. **Mr. Tobgay** (Bhutan) said that his country's commitment to gender equality was reflected in its policies and laws, including two articles of the Constitution, and that bills strengthening women's rights and the institutions responsible for protecting them were about to be adopted by Parliament. For the first time, Bhutan had also made gender a cross-cutting theme of its five-year plan, which now included data disaggregated by gender. It had also adopted a national plan of action for gender, covering seven priority areas, including training, employment, stereotypes and violence against women, and implemented through a network of coordination mechanisms.

18. Bhutan was proud of the fact that its traditional society provided a safe environment for women. In much of the country, families were matrilineal, and women inherited property, which endowed them with real decision-making power. As shown in its seventh periodic report on the situation of women in 2009, Bhutan was, despite its limited capacities, consistently taking steps to reach full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, including by strengthening its institutional capacity and allocating additional funding to the legislative and executive branches of government.

19. The results of many years of promotion of women's rights were now evident, particularly in the achievement of gender parity in primary school enrolment, which was a target of the Millennium

Development Goals. The country intended to continue fighting all forms of inequality between men and women.

20. **Mr. Jomaa** (Tunisia) explained that his country had always been convinced that neither democracy nor development could be achieved without women's participation and that strengthening women's rights was the best way to immunize the family and society against numerous evils. In 1956, the Code of Personal Status had emancipated women, abolished polygamy, and made divorce subject to judicial procedures. Later, the system of rights and acquired benefits had been considerably enriched, particularly following the adoption in 1993 of a series of legislative reforms aimed at removing all forms of gender-based discrimination from key legislation, including the Labour Code and the Criminal Code. The Tunisian Constitution and laws proclaimed the equal status of women and their partnership with men in family matters and in society, and so it was in practice.

21. The 6-year-old girl school enrolment rate was currently 99 per cent and 58 per cent of secondary school pupils and 60 per cent of students in higher education were female. Women accounted for 27.5 per cent of members of the Chamber of Deputies and 33 per cent of municipal councillors. Women were also well represented in the judiciary and in journalism. Furthermore, a law had been promulgated allowing the option of community property for husband and wife, in the interests of the family, and a research, documentation and information centre on women had been given the task of monitoring and advancing the status of women, including implementation of the strategy for combating all forms of violence against women.

22. Tunisia's presidency of the Arab Women's Organization, held by the country's First Lady, Mrs. Leïla Ben Ali, had particularly helped sensitize public opinion, the media and the Governments of Arab countries to the importance of promoting the status of women. A joint strategy to combat gender-based violence had also been adopted along with another social initiative, the institution of an Arab Day of the Elderly.

23. Given that equality and partnership between men and women were essential for societies to progress, promoting the status of women should be regarded as a universal cause that called for much greater interest,

support and solidarity on the part of the entire international community.

24. **Mr. Venugopal** (India) said that, shortly after independence, the founding fathers of his country had ensured that the principles of gender equality and the empowerment of women were written into the Constitution, including affirmative action, where necessary. In 2001, India had formulated a national policy on the empowerment of women and had made gender issues an integral part of its 2007-2012 five-year plan and all its development plans.

25. Several of the numerous projects under way concerned education, economic and social empowerment, and health. The Education for All campaign focused on girls living in remote areas, offering them incentives such as residential facilities and free meals. Small and medium-sized industrial, handicraft, and agricultural enterprises had been established thanks to the 2.2 million self-help groups formed under the Swayamsidha programme, which covered 33 million households. Since the launching of the National Rural Health Mission in 2005, health outlays had exceeded \$3.5 billion a year, with priority given to maternal and children's health programmes, particularly in order to reduce maternal and infant mortality. A network of voluntary health workers in rural areas who received performance-based compensation had helped to focus efforts on the 235 districts accounting for 70 per cent of infant and maternal deaths.

26. Political empowerment was the most important component in women's overall empowerment. The Constitution had been amended to reserve 33 per cent of the seats in local bodies to women, and currently over a million women had been elected to such bodies. In 2009, Parliament had raised that quota to 50 per cent. Moreover, a bill that had already been passed by the Upper House of Parliament and was due to be considered by the Lower House, would reserve for women one third of the seats in the federal Parliament and in state legislative assemblies.

27. India regarded gender equality and the empowerment of women as top priorities and therefore welcomed three major achievements of the United Nations in 2010: the establishment of UN-Women, the launching of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and the launching of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health. India hoped that the Executive Board of

UN-Women would soon be established and promptly engage in effective actions meeting the expectations of the Member States.

28. **Mr. García González** (El Salvador) welcomed the establishment of UN-Women and the appointment of Ms. Bachelet as its head, in view of her well-known leadership skills and commitment to development and the advancement of women. The start-up of the new entity and the constitution of its Executive Board should be regarded as an opportunity to consolidate the principles of universality, national responsibility, and equitable geographical representation, so that UN-Women would from the start be a strong, independent, sufficiently well-funded and geographically representative body, with broad international legitimacy.

29. In that connection, El Salvador had no doubt that the activities of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) would be fully incorporated into the work of UN-Women and would not just result in a juxtaposition of the mandates of the merged entities. Indeed, El Salvador wished that the actions to strengthen the Institute's capacity and its studies would continue to be carried out at the current INSTRAW facilities in the Dominican Republic, which were in a convenient location with low operating costs and had already acquired much experience.

30. El Salvador was grateful for the visit in March 2010 by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, during which Ms. Manjoo had been able to document the efforts made by the country in that area and its need for support from the international community. Within the framework of its 2010-2014 five-year development plan, El Salvador had launched its second National Policy on Women, which provided, in particular, for forging closer ties with civil society organizations and movements, especially women's associations, and restructuring the programme for combating violence against women so that it covered all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, harassment in the workplace, trafficking in persons, domestic violence and sexual abuse.

31. **Ms. Shiolashvili** (Georgia), endorsing the statement made by the representative of Belgium on behalf of the European Union, welcomed the establishment of UN-Women and congratulated Ms. Bachelet on her appointment as head of that entity.

32. The Government of Georgia attached great importance to the advancement of women at every level and had set itself ambitious goals in that regard, with the help of the Gender Equality Advisory Council, comprising members of parliament and the executive branch, the Office of the Ombudsman, and non-governmental groups.

33. The gender equality act, adopted in 2010, established a national mechanism for the advancement of women, required government plans and budgets to take gender considerations into account, and sought to strengthen the security and political participation of women. Another law, on the elimination of domestic violence and protection for its victims, had been extensively amended in 2009 to supplement mechanisms for preventing such violence and combating its various manifestations. That law had, for instance, made it possible to establish two new state-run shelters for victims and to implement a whole range of measures to support them, including collaboration with local non-governmental organizations.

34. Measures to help vulnerable women included assistance for persons displaced by the ethnic cleansing that had occurred following the invasion in 2008 of Georgian territory which still remained under foreign occupation. A series of General Assembly resolutions had addressed the fate of those victims and the Georgian Government was making every effort to ensure that the displaced had decent living conditions and financial support.

35. As a responsible member of the international community, Georgia honoured its obligations as a signatory to the major conventions combating violence against women. Endowed with more effective tools for addressing gender issues, Georgia was continually striving to enhance the status of Georgian women.

36. **Mr. Borg** (Malta) said that while the statement made by the representative of Belgium on behalf of the European Union generally reflected his country's position on the advancement of women, he wished to clarify his country's position on sexual and reproductive health and rights. While reaffirming its support for the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/CONF.171/13), adopted in 1994, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1) and subsequent international instruments, as well as the Millennium Development Goals, Malta did not share the view that

those commitments could not be met without guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive health rights and services.

37. Malta intended, in particular, to disregard any recommendation that could lead to the practice of abortion in the country. National legislation prohibited the voluntary termination of pregnancy and did not recognize it as a family planning measure. Any discussion of rights and services relating to women's empowerment and reproductive health had to take into consideration the fundamental right to life. Malta continued to maintain that any position or recommendation relating to women's empowerment and gender equality would be considered in the context of the reservations made at the time of adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

38. Nevertheless, the advancement of women and gender equality were a mainstreaming priority for Malta in relation to the drafting and enforcement of laws, provision of equal opportunities, women's access to the labour market and to social spheres, violence and housing policy issues, and in the fight against poverty and exclusion and their transmission from one generation to another. For Malta, it was essential to achieve Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals: promote gender equality and empower women. It therefore welcomed the establishment of UN-Women and the appointment of Ms. Bachelet to lead it.

39. **Ms. Woldegiorgis** (Ethiopia) welcomed the significant progress made in national, regional and international policies since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the favourable developments regarding girls' and women's access to education.

40. However, serious problems remained and required commitment from all: there were still laws discriminating against women; their level of representation in decision-making was still below the 30 per cent target; most women still lived in poverty; and maternal mortality was still a major challenge in many developing countries. Furthermore, negative attitudes and stereotypes had hindered progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. Non-traditional forms of violence, such as

trafficking in women and girls, abduction, and rape had become global phenomena. Those problems required greater political commitment at every level in order to increase resources and strengthen policies for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Ethiopia therefore welcomed the establishment of UN-Women and trusted that its Executive Board would be geographically representative.

41. Recognizing the need to take practical action to enhance women's lives, Ethiopia had adopted a number of measures, particularly to increase the number of women taking part in decision-making processes; to improve the school enrolment rate for girls and women's access to education; and to guarantee women's property rights. Food security programmes had notably benefited female-headed households and amendments to the Family Code and the Penal Code had led to harsher punishments for the perpetrators of acts of violence against women, including abduction, rape, trafficking and genital mutilation.

42. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) reaffirmed her country's commitment to the advancement of women and described the three pillars of Government policy: improvement of women's living conditions; enhancement of their social and legal status; and the strengthening of institutions.

43. Women were increasingly occupying strategic positions in the administration and in the political arena. In the economic sphere, liberalization of the banking sector had opened up new jobs for women, while institutional support for women operating small businesses, assistance for new women entrepreneurs, and the promotion of partnerships with businesswomen in other countries were some of the measures that had encouraged many Cameroonian women to be active in business.

44. As for women living in rural areas, Cameroon had set about identifying and remedying the factors explaining the persistence of prejudices against women. In relation to women's access to non-agricultural employment, steps had been taken to facilitate the recruitment of women and girls for road projects and in local public services, and for the establishment of micro-enterprises. In health care, the country provided for all women's basic needs and some village health centres were equipped to provide reproductive health-care services, HIV/AIDS sensitization, cost-free antiretroviral drugs and hygiene and health training

courses. Cameroon was determined to combat female genital mutilation and early marriages.

45. As for violence against women, Cameroon had embarked on grass-roots sensitization and advocacy. Cases requiring victim protection or punishment of perpetrators were handled at the interministerial level, with media involvement.

46. Cameroon considered that the advancement of women was part of human development. The desire of the Cameroonian authorities to construct a harmonious society that could meet the needs of both men and women was reflected in public policies and, with respect to the advancement of women, enjoyed the support of the international community. The key to solving problems was still poverty reduction at every level. Cameroon welcomed the establishment of UN-Women, as it was convinced that it would contribute more vigorously to Member States' efforts on behalf of women.

47. **Mr. Acharya** (Nepal) said that his Government regarded gender equality and gender mainstreaming as top priorities. As a result, women currently held one third of the seats in the Constituent Assembly; were involved in decision-making thanks to an amendment of the Nepalese Civil Service Act; had increased the ranks of the army and police, and participated in the formulation and implementation of local development programmes. The Government had also established a National Women's Commission and introduced various programmes to ensure their empowerment in the social and economic spheres. It had also taken steps to guarantee women's rights to property and citizenship.

48. In connection with implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Government had, with the help of a law review committee, repealed or amended a number of laws that discriminated against women and was continuing its efforts in that area.

49. To combat the serious problem of trafficking, in 2007 Nepal had passed a law on the subject, had created special task forces to operate at the national, district and municipal levels, and had opened centres for the protection of women and children victims of trafficking.

50. Coordinated health-care measures had resulted in a greatly reduced maternal mortality rate since 1996

and a greater focus on the question of women's reproductive rights. The international community should give priority to the development of rural areas, which was a precondition for enhancing the situation and empowerment of the women living there, and provide increased financial and technical assistance to developing countries, especially those emerging from conflict.

51. **Mr. Ould Hadrami** (Mauritania) pointed out that his country's Personal Status Code guaranteed more equitable rights for women, while Mauritania's Constitution provided for their participation in political and public life. Measures adopted by the President of the Republic had significantly increased such participation, with some women now serving as ministers or occupying high-ranking positions in the administration.

52. In recent years, major progress had been made on the demographic front, with life expectancy increasing from 54 to 60 years and marked declines in death and fertility rates. However, women's health status remained a cause of concern. Mauritania's maternal mortality rate was particularly high.

53. In education, the school enrolment rate for girls had greatly improved, especially in rural areas, thanks to the law on compulsory education for children aged from 6 to 14 years. Girls accounted for over 50 per cent of pupils in secondary education and there were apparently more women than men at university.

54. Given its priority of promoting women's economic participation, the Government had established a number of poverty reduction mechanisms, particularly in rural areas and for female-headed households, but there were still numerous hurdles to be overcome.

55. **Mr. Pálsson** (Iceland) said that his country had always been at the forefront of the advancement of women and was pleased at the progress made in that area by international bodies. The establishment of UN-Women was a turning point and that entity should direct future efforts to achieve the gender-related Millennium Development Goals, in a bid to lower maternal mortality rates, expand education for girls, remedy the gender wage gap, develop employment opportunities for women and increase their involvement in the political process. The Icelandic delegation welcomed the attention given to the advancement of women in United Nations debates. Advantage should be taken of that momentum to



honour commitments made, particularly vis-à-vis the poorest countries.

56. With regard to implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Iceland had particularly focused on women's participation in peace negotiations, as evidenced in its establishment of a training programme which had been attended by Afghan and Palestinian students and was geared to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in developing countries and in countries affected by conflict. At the same time, the Government of Iceland intended to update its national action plan by adopting a new set of indicators to facilitate more effective monitoring of implementation of the resolution.

57. In 2010, Iceland had ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

58. **Ms. Borges** (Timor-Leste) said that, in connection with the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), her country had partnered with Ireland and Liberia to launch a cross-learning initiative on women, peace and security, with the goal of achieving a better understanding of the plight of women directly affected by conflict and sharing ideas on how best to protect their interests.

59. In addition, Timor-Leste was currently adopting numerous measures to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to align domestic legislation with the Convention. Welcoming the appointment of one of her compatriots to the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, she said that Timor-Leste was taking steps to act on the conclusions of that Committee regarding her country's initial report, which had been submitted in 2009.

60. In order to counter violence and discrimination, Timor-Leste had passed a law against domestic violence in 2009, was taking steps to facilitate the reporting of acts of gender-based violence and was providing training for the police force in that area, while at the same time encouraging the recruitment of more women police officers.

61. Gender focal points had been instructed to encourage proactive participation by women in social and political life. Given the key role that women played in the economic stability of countries and in

peacebuilding and security, and in view of the enormous difficulties they faced as a result of the current crises, Timor-Leste welcomed the Security Council's debate on the participation of women in peacebuilding, which it regarded as both timely and necessary.

62. The delegation of Timor-Leste offered its full support to UN-Women and was pleased at the prospect of seeing that entity cooperating with the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

63. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) said that the establishment of UN-Women reflected the increased importance that the international community attached to the promotion and protection of women's rights. The Gabonese delegation was pleased to note that the composition of the entity's Executive Board would abide by the principle of equitable geographical representation.

64. The policies enacted by the Gabonese Government were designed, on the one hand, to guarantee women's access to health care, education and employment and, on the other, to expand their involvement in decision-making in the political, economic and social spheres.

65. The Government encouraged increasingly stronger representation of women in decision-making bodies and was working, with support from the United Nations Development Programme and UNFPA, in particular, to promote and protect their rights. Despite those efforts and the progress made, it had to be recognized that gender equality was a long way off. It was therefore vital to strive to honour the commitments made to support the advancement of women, to step up efforts to combat violence against women and to improve reproductive health care, so as to reduce the maternal mortality rate.

66. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka) said that the status of women left much to be desired, as they still faced multiple forms of discrimination in the agricultural sector and were still victims of domestic violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking. Nevertheless, numerous countries had established legal frameworks to promote and protect women's rights and had striven to facilitate women's access to education, health care, social security and employment.

67. Having worked for decades to promote women's active participation in political life, Sri Lanka could point to very positive gains in gender equality and achievement of targets of the Millennium Development

Goals relating to women and children. By taking those Goals into account in its national development agenda, the country had achieved satisfactory results in respect of the enrolment of girls in primary education and in higher education; the literacy rate for persons between 15 and 24 years of age; access to health care; and the percentage of births taking place in hospitals. It was also worth pointing out that women accounted for 69 per cent of teachers.

68. Although it had gone through a difficult period, his Government had continued its efforts to respond to women's needs and promote their empowerment, as testified in particular by the removal of provisions that discriminated against women in the law on nationality and in the land development ordinance, adoption of the Women's Charter and the planned establishment of a national women's commission.

69. Sri Lanka had taken proactive steps to curb violence against women, including through awareness campaigns designed to prevent early marriages. It had also put in place programmes to protect migrant workers and members of their families from exploitation, violence, and discriminatory practices, while passing laws to facilitate the legal protection of minors and implementing social assistance programmes. It had also established a 10-year programme for developing rural areas by improving infrastructure and facilitating women's access to new technology. It had also begun to address women's unemployment, especially through self-employment programmes.

70. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that his country fully endorsed the statement made by the Belgian representative on behalf of the European Union and that it welcomed the establishment of UN-Women and the appointment of Ms. Bachelet as its head. Since 2003, the Government of Montenegro had made many efforts to enhance gender equality and protect women, including through a gender equality law in 2007 and a 2008-2012 Action Plan for the Achievement of Gender Equality. It was also planning to pass a domestic violence law in the near future. Furthermore, it had also established a Gender Equality Department in the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, as well as a parliamentary committee on gender equality. In addition, Montenegro was actively encouraging women's participation in political life. In 2010, it had submitted its first report as an independent State on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women and a midterm report on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, which had been submitted prior to the Summit.

71. **Mr. Gutiérrez** (Peru) welcomed the establishment of UN-Women and said that his country hoped to join its Executive Board in order to work for gender equality and the advancement of women.

72. Peru possessed a constitutional and legal framework designed to guarantee the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, including a law on equal opportunities for men and women and an equal opportunities plan. As violence against women hindered their advancement, Peru, which already had a programme for combating domestic and sexual violence, was currently implementing a 2009-2015 national plan to address that serious problem. It had also launched an information campaign against the wood-burning stoves used in 30 per cent of households in the Andes, as the smoke they produced posed a threat to the health of women and other family members. The goal was to have five times fewer stoves of that kind by 2021.

73. In education, the goal of primary education for all had practically been achieved, while in secondary and higher education there were more female than male students. Increasing numbers of women were entering the labour market and participating in political life.

74. Finally, as in previous years, Peru would be one of the sponsors of the resolution on the elimination of all forms of violence against women and the resolution supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula.

75. **Mr. Cabactulan** (Philippines) said that the advancement of women was a priority for his country, which had long had appropriate institutional and legal mechanisms to that end. The Magna Carta for Women, a charter of women's human rights adopted in 2009, provided the legal framework needed to protect women against exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and human trafficking. For its part, the 1995-2025 Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development recognized the role of women in peacebuilding and peacemaking. In view of the large number of women among members of the Philippine diaspora, protecting women was a priority of his country's policy on migrant workers.

76. Finally, he underscored the importance of comprehensive implementation of the Beijing

Declaration and Platform for Action, welcomed the establishment of UN-Women, and expressed satisfaction with the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which encouraged a human rights-based, gender- and age-sensitive approach to the victims and attempted to address the factors that exposed individuals, especially women and children, to trafficking in persons.

77. **Mr. Pak Tok Hun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the advancement of women was a critical social and political issue. Immediately after his country's liberation in 1946, the Government had promulgated a gender equality law and women currently enjoyed equality in all spheres of public and social life. His country was committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to making an active contribution to all international efforts for the promotion and protection of women's rights.

78. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea wished to refer once again to the attitude of Japan regarding the issue of "comfort women", which was considered one of the most typical examples of violations of women's rights in modern history, with hundreds of thousands of Asian women, including Korean women, as the victims. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea once again urged Japan to acknowledge its responsibility for the sexual slavery of 200,000 women, the forced enlistment of 8.4 million Koreans and the massacre of a million more, to offer a sincere apology and to make reparations to the victims.

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

79. **Mr. Takasu** (Japan) said that the accusations made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were groundless. He said that Japan assumed responsibility for its past and had been promoting international peace and prosperity for over 60 years, showing full respect for democracy and human rights. In 1993, Japan had extended sincere apologies and expressed remorse regarding the "comfort women" and the Prime Minister had written a letter of apology to them.

80. Regarding reparations for the harm done, he recalled that, in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration, all claims for damages prior to 15 August 1945 would be relinquished once relations between the

two countries had returned to normal. Japan was endeavouring to normalize its relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and it requested that country to do the same, in particular by demonstrating its goodwill regarding the issues of abducted persons and nuclear weapons.

81. **Mr. Pak Tok Hun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said he was dissatisfied and disappointed with the response from the representative of Japan, who sought to deceive the international community by claiming that Japan was doing its best to settle matters when in fact it had not made amends for its past crimes. The "comfort women" issue had been debated for over 20 years in various United Nations bodies because it was a very serious crime against humanity, but Japan's response had not changed. As for the Pyongyang Declaration, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had done everything in its power to honour its commitments, including with regard to the disappeared persons, whereas Japan refused to assume its responsibilities. Japan should be ashamed to lie to the international community in that way.

82. **Mr. Takasu** (Japan) said that he had already explained Japan's position in the past and had no wish to repeat it. However, he reserved the right to refute the remarks of the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on a future occasion.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*