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Chair: Mr. Al-Shami (Vice-Chair) (Yemen)
later: Mr. Tommo Monthe (Chair) (Cameroon)

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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 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/65/336)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/65/41, A/65/206, A/65/219, A/65/221 and A/65/262)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (A/65/226)

1. **Ms. Leskovar** (Slovenia) stressed the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for the well-being of children around the world and encouraged all Member States which had not yet ratified it to do so. Slovenia also fully supported the campaign to achieve universal ratification of the Convention's two Optional Protocols, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. A Slovenian version of the Protocols was published in May 2010 on the tenth anniversary of their adoption, in order to raise public awareness of their content.

2. Protecting children's rights was one of Slovenia's foreign policy priorities in the field of human rights and development cooperation. Actors at all levels must work together to eliminate violence against children. Although much had been done in almost 15 years since the Machel Study was issued, children were still victims of grave violations in armed conflicts. Urgent and comprehensive action was necessary to fight impunity for such violations.

3. The Convention was the only core international human rights instrument without a communications procedure, and Slovenia welcomed efforts at the Human Rights Council towards the adoption of an optional protocol establishing one.

4. **Ms. Bruell-Melchior** (Monaco) said the Millennium Development Goals Summit had highlighted the lack of progress on maternal and infant mortality and the insufficient decline in the number of deaths among children under 5. Children's environments were decisive for their development and the Goals required measures to combat poverty and to improve living conditions, education and health care. For that reason Monaco had thus made child protection

an international cooperation priority. Thousands of children in Monaco's partner countries benefited from programmes to fight hunger and malnutrition and treat HIV/AIDS, malaria, sickle cell anaemia and bilharziasis, particularly among deprived and rural populations and taking into account disabled children's needs. Monaco also supported maternal reproductive health programmes, the building of schools and crèches, the training of teachers and sanitation.

5. Violence had an indelible impact on children's behaviour and she paid tribute to the work of the Special Representative on violence against children and of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Monaco would continue to provide its full support for the Special Representative's strategic programme and had strengthened its own Penal Code to ban all forms of violence against and sexual exploitation of children. Finally, she expressed her Government's concern over the grave human rights situations for children in armed conflicts.

6. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that Jamaica noted with serious concern the sobering prospects for the world's children described in the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the special session on children (A/65/226) and the worrisome trends noted in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (A/65/221). Alarmed by the number of children living in situations of armed conflict around the world, it intended to communicate its formal endorsement of the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups to the Government of France in the very near future.

7. In Jamaica, the proportion of children in the population was projected to fall to under 30 per cent by 2020. Children born in 2010 had a 97 per cent chance of surviving beyond the age of 5, an almost 100 per cent chance of enrolling in school and an average life expectancy of more than 73 years. Despite significant progress in accomplishing the child-related Millennium Development Goals, in the current economic climate, it had not been possible to implement several well-developed plans and policies that would have helped to make a positive difference in the lives of children. Jamaica had nevertheless instituted a wide-ranging policy to counter violence against children, with the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society. In addition, the Child Care

and Protection Act, 2004 had introduced new standards for the treatment of children while removing the fragmentation of child-related legislation.

8. Promoting and protecting the rights of the child and creating a world fit for children required a coordinated international effort to implement the outcomes of the major international conferences and summits, whether trade-related or geared towards social and economic development, poverty eradication or human rights. Central among those outcomes were the Millennium Development Goals, for which efforts must be intensified to meet the 2015 deadline. At the same time, special attention should continue to be given to the needs of the girl child.

9. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) welcomed the steady increase in the number of ratifications of the conventions and protocols on children. Eritrea itself had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACRWC) in 2000 and had acceded to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention. It was party to several International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, including the Minimum Age Convention, and was up to date in its reporting obligation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, having most recently reported in 2008.

10. Since poverty disproportionately affected children, Eritrea's long-standing policy had been to achieve rapid economic growth and human development, including by ensuring food security. The introduction of salt iodization, food fortification and therapeutic feeding centres had led to a decline in numbers of underweight children, which was expected to continue. Under-five, infant and maternal mortality had declined by 53 per cent, 41 per cent and 51 per cent respectively since 1995, HIV/AIDS prevalence by 71 per cent and malaria deaths by more than 82 per cent.

11. Eritrea was seeking universal elementary education and had achieved an 87.3 per cent increase in enrolment since 1995. Children from all nine ethnic groups were instructed in their mother tongues at primary school. There had also been determined efforts to redress the gender and regional imbalance in the education system. However, only 56.2 per cent of school-age children were currently enrolled and the Government was working with UNICEF to increase attendance in nomadic communities.

12. Eritrea had banned female genital mutilation and had provisions in its legal system to protect vulnerable children. A plan of action to combat the commercial exploitation of children took a preventive approach. Orphans and other vulnerable children were also reintegrated with their extended families. Eritrea had endorsed the Paris Commitments to protect children unlawfully recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups and had joined other States to advance that agenda.

13. **Ms. Jónsdóttir** (Iceland) said that children's issues were a major concern for her Government. Its bilateral development cooperation had focused on building schools for poor and marginalized rural children and on adult literacy projects; primary school enrolment and retention had shown a marked increase as a result.

14. Iceland welcomed enhanced emphasis placed by UNICEF on vulnerable children and, serving for the first time on the UNICEF Executive Board, was more aware than ever of the colossal tasks that remained. Too many children were not going to school, too many were undernourished and too many dying needlessly. She called for continued focus on the goals set out in the Declaration of the Special Session on Children in 2002, "A World Fit for Children" and on the Millennium Development Goals. Iceland welcomed the Secretary-General's Global Strategy on Women's and Children's Health, which should identify the policy changes needed to improve health and save lives, thus facilitating poverty reduction and economic growth.

15. She noted the call by the Special Representative on violence against children for countries to develop comprehensive strategies. Child victims should be provided with support, social services and counselling. Iceland was deeply concerned with the sale of children, child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking in children and it called on all States to ratify and implement the relevant legal instruments.

16. Earlier in 2010 Iceland had joined the 94 countries which had endorsed the Paris Commitments and Principles and it was confident measures taken would reduce children's exposure to the horrors of war and foster the reintegration into their society of children already affected by war.

17. **Mr. Ahmed** (Bangladesh) said that Bangladesh was committed to promoting the best interests of children. The current National Plan of Action for

Children (2005-2010) reflected the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of “A World Fit for Children” and 2001-2010 had been declared the Decade of the Rights of the Child in Bangladesh. Under the auspices of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bangladesh was actively pursuing children’s rights issues and had endorsed SAARC conventions on child welfare and combating child prostitution.

18. Bangladesh had made substantial progress in reducing child mortality and malnutrition and there had been notable declines in iodine deficiency disorders and in maternal and neonatal tetanus. Vitamin A supplementation, oral rehydration therapy, polio vaccination and universal immunization programmes had saved many children’s lives. Disparity between boys and girls in most social indicators had also been reduced and in some cases eliminated — for example, in primary and secondary school enrolment. The relevant target under the Goals had been achieved four years earlier.

19. The Government had enacted stringent legislation to protect children from all forms of abuse, exploitation, violence, trafficking and discrimination and the age threshold for child criminal responsibility had been raised. Bangladesh was also a party to the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and its largest export-earning sector, the garment industry, was now totally free of child labour. Collaboration between the Government, the private sector and NGOs had led to marked improvements for disadvantaged children. The Prime Minister had called for urgent measures to address the issue of street children and steps were being taken to protect child domestic workers and prevent children being used in the drug trade or sexually exploited.

20. Bangladesh celebrated National Girl Child Day every 30 September and awareness-raising programmes had been undertaken to prevent the practice of “Eve teasing”, the public sexual harassment of women and girls.

21. **Ms. Shiolashvili** (Georgia) said that her Government had been consistently pursuing the social inclusion and development of all children. The number of children in institutions had declined from 5,000 in 2004 to 1,000 in 2010. Foster care and reintegration into biological families, alternative childcare networks and training for social workers had been supported.

Community services had been improved, particularly for children with disabilities, and provision made for street children. Children were also protected from all forms of violence by means of an effective child referral procedure.

22. Georgia was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and had recently endorsed the Paris Commitments against the use of children in armed conflicts. As a result of the foreign military aggression of August 2008 and the occupation of Georgian territories, thousands of families with children from Abkhazia and South Ossetia had been forced to leave their homes. The General Assembly had backed the rights of these internally displaced persons — who numbered more than 400,000 — to return to their homes. There were also multiple reports of ethnically motivated human rights abuses against children in the occupied territories and children suffered most from the militarily-imposed dividing walls. Obstacles to humanitarian assistance, freedom of movement and access to health care, denial of education in their native language and forced conscription and labour were but a few problems children faced in their everyday lives.

23. **Ms. Ortigosa** (Uruguay) said that the Convention and Optional Protocols were the most comprehensive international legal instrument for the protection of children and should be given priority by all States through their ratification and full implementation. The human rights of children were enshrined in Uruguay’s Code on Children and Adolescents and were further promoted by the Constitution, international instruments and special laws. Children had the right to be heard and to receive information about decisions that affected them, which in Uruguay included the right to access the court system and legal proceedings with adequate assistance in order to protect their rights. The Government strove to recognize children’s rights in public policy, legislation and social institutions, taking into account the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, a national consultative council joined representatives of Government and civil society to conduct budget reviews for effective policy implementation, recommend changes to regulations and propose new activities to better ensure the promotion of the rights of children.

24. Children living in poverty were of particular concern. The economic crisis in Uruguay had plunged

over 60 per cent of people under the age of 18 below the poverty line, although policies implemented since had reduced that number by 10 per cent. The Government was improving the social security system by integrating services for young children and focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable people. In the context of the Millennium Development Goals, children's interests had been approached as a cross-cutting issue, and great progress had been made in terms of eradicating malnutrition, achieving universal primary and secondary education and reducing infant mortality. The sexual exploitation of children was another major issue of concern, and poverty played a primary role in increasing vulnerability to such exploitation. Coordination among Government institutions and with civil society was the only way to provide effective solutions to that complex issue.

25. The current thematic focus on early childhood was especially important to her Government. Developing national policies and programmes to respond to young children's basic and special needs was a critical stage in States' progress towards achieving the effective protection of children's rights.

26. **Mr. Minkoa She** (Cameroon) said that the situation for children in many parts of the world, in particular Africa, was of grave concern. Cameroon had ratified the Convention in 1993 and had submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child that year. The Government had adopted a national strategy on early childhood development in 2009 to consolidate initiatives related to early childhood.

27. In the area of health, maternal health, nutrition, rehabilitation of developmentally disabled children and care for vulnerable children were major priorities. The national multisectoral strategy to combat HIV/AIDS focused on access to treatment and prevention, with a particular emphasis on sensitizing youth and pregnant women. Antiretroviral treatment had been made available free of charge and economic assistance was offered to AIDS orphans and other children affected by the pandemic. Other health programmes had strengthened community health facilities, improved access to clean water and expanded immunization coverage, particularly for children under 5.

28. In the area of education, with the support of UNICEF, a basic education programme was increasing girls' enrolment rate. Primary school education was

available free of charge, and financial support was also provided for private schooling. Education and health received the largest budget allocations, with their funding progressively increasing. In line with the principles of non-discrimination and the consideration of the best interests of the child, programmes in support of the most vulnerable children were also a special priority.

29. All of those initiatives faced enormous limitations due to a lack of resources and funding. Only the support of the international community could play a decisive role in the Government's efforts to fulfil its international commitments. Cameroon gratefully acknowledged the vital contribution of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to the promotion and protection of children's rights, both at the international level through its general comments, and at the national level, through its assessment of country reports and related actions.

30. **Ms. Al-Yahyai** (Oman) said that her country was fully committed to implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which it had been a Party since 1996. Her Government had adopted all relevant measures to ensure that children's rights were protected, including direct cooperation with UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes charged with upholding the rights and welfare of children.

31. Oman had ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the ILO Minimum Age Convention, in addition to its ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Efforts to provide health care to children had resulted in a significant reduction in child mortality. The Ministry of Education had taken steps to provide free education to all children from the age of six in order to encourage regular school attendance, leading to a drastic reduction in dropout rates.

32. Out of its conviction that children were a pillar of society, her Government had established a series of forums, including Internet-based communities, which afforded children the opportunity to express their views and ideas freely and meet other children from across the Sultanate, in addition to providing educators with

training in the formulation of curricula. Moreover, the Oman Children's Museum rendered science and technology accessible to children, enabling them to meet their academic requirements in those areas.

33. Oman attached particular importance to the needs of children with disabilities, as evinced by its efforts to provide special services to those children in order to facilitate their integration, including health care and accessible public facilities, parks and transport. In addition, her Government was working to raise public awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and to encourage studies on the care of persons with disabilities, with a view to improving the services provided.

34. **Ms. Mubukwanu-Sibanze** (Zambia) said that her Government remained committed to implementing legislative and administrative measures for the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. The prevention of malaria had been given urgent priority, as it was the primary cause of death in children under the age of 5. Interventions included expanded delivery of insecticide-treated mosquito nets and health programmes targeting school children and pregnant women, resulting in a 66 per cent decrease in malaria deaths for all age groups and a 68 per cent decrease in severe anaemia in children under 5. Other measures to decrease child and infant mortality included campaigns to increase immunization against communicable diseases and the establishment of HIV counselling and testing sites to prevent mother-to-child transmission. However, greater efforts were still required to improve paediatric treatment for children living with HIV and AIDS. Increased resources were also needed to ensure accessible and quality health services for women and children and meet Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5.

35. Several bills to combat and prevent the sexual and economic exploitation of children were before the Parliament. They included measures to criminalize the provision of pornographic material to children; prohibit teachers from engaging in sexual relationships with pupils; and remove existing restrictions on the receipt by courts of evidence by child witnesses. Her delegation welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking, and the Government hoped to strengthen cooperation with fellow members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the implementation of the Strategic Plan of Action on

Combating Trafficking in Persons. Domestically, measures to promote the rights of the child included the establishment of a national child protection unit comprised of police officers specially trained to work with children, including those who were victims of trafficking and gender-based violence.

36. Access to education had been improved through the recent recruitment of 5,000 new teachers, many of whom had been deployed to rural areas, and through the construction of new schools. With the help of cooperating partners, the Government continued to implement public welfare programmes to help fill the gap for households with limited economic potential and improve the living standards and well-being of children.

37. *Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Chair, took the Chair.*

38. **Mr. Ulibarri** (Costa Rica) said that his delegation reaffirmed its commitment to protecting children's rights and called for the universal ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocols. Investing in early childhood, was an ethical obligation and brought the highest returns in terms of improving people's quality of life through adulthood. Investing in the youngest members of society could have the great long-term impact of breaking cycles of poverty and enabling people to live their full potential.

39. The Government of Costa Rica had been emphasizing universal birth registration, going beyond the goal of simple legal recognition to promote the right of children to know and be cared for by their parents, as established in the Convention. Regulations on registration promoted the identification or investigation of the identity of parents, thereby facilitating children's access to adequate resources for their development. In the first four years since a law on responsible parenthood was passed in 2001, the proportion of births with an undeclared father had dropped from 29 per cent to 8 per cent. Mothers had also received support in requesting paternal recognition of their children, with almost 50 per cent of requests voluntarily accepted by fathers. The Government was making new efforts to provide systematic support to mothers who were heads of households, including childcare options and early childhood education. The Secretary-General should expand coverage of the issue of early childhood education in future reports. In line with General Comment No. 7 of the Committee on the

Rights of the Child, early childhood education should include a human rights dimension that developed a sense of human dignity.

40. His delegation supported the call by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children for States to implement a national legal ban on all forms of violence against children. A law prohibiting corporal punishment had been enacted in Costa Rica in 2008. Efforts to prevent violence were critical to children in early childhood, as they were especially at risk of suffering irreversible emotional and physical harm. He also supported the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography that the approaches adopted to guarantee the protection of children from sexual exploitation should be re-evaluated. His delegation supported international cooperation to combat human trafficking, and in that respect, welcomed the recent adoption of the Global Action Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons. Finally, he welcomed the growing interest of the Security Council in the issue of children and armed conflict.

41. **Mrs. Ezezika** (Nigeria) said that in Nigeria, of the 36 states of the Federation, 24 had adopted the Child's Rights Act 2003, which incorporated the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Some states had enacted their own child's rights laws prohibiting, for example, street hawking and early marriage. Implementation of the Act was guided by the National Child Policy, approved in 2007, and by a national plan of action. National and state implementation committees had been formed, and some states had established family courts. Efforts were being made to ensure that the remaining 11 states adopted the Act, that adequate resources were allocated for its implementation and that the judiciary received capacity training to enforce it.

42. The number of orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria had risen as a result of accidents, emergencies, malaria and HIV/AIDS. As part of its response, in 2007 the Government had launched a national plan of action on orphans and vulnerable children and had developed national guidelines and standards of practice. In 2008, it had conducted a situation assessment and analysis to generate data for the action plan. In conjunction with its development

partners, Nigeria provided services to orphans and vulnerable children in the areas of education, health, shelter and care, nutrition, protection, psychosocial support and household economic empowerment.

43. Despite steady progress in primary school enrolment, more than half of Nigeria's out-of-school children were girls. To address that situation, the Government had launched a universal basic education programme, opened several schools for girls' literacy and set up vocation and skills acquisition projects. It had also recruited more female teachers, established female education boards, reduced the direct cost of schooling, sought to identify best practices in girl-child education and provided grants to NGOs to produce and improve information, education and communication programming and materials for publicizing girl-child programmes.

44. In order to address unacceptably high infant and child mortality rates, Nigeria had adopted an integrated maternal, newborn and child health strategy and was working to sensitize policymakers and religious, traditional and opinion leaders to the need for action at every level. To underscore its commitment to tackling the problems of violence and other crimes against children, it had begun the process of ratifying the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Lastly, in order to give children a voice in Nigerian affairs, national and state-level children's parliaments had been established to allow them to air their views and to contribute meaningfully to policy on sustainable development.

45. **Mr. Şen** (Turkey) said that safeguarding and increasing the well-being of children was one of humanity's most profound responsibilities. Hence, Turkey was party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Additional Protocols on smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, and ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 concerning child labour. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been accorded supremacy over national law by an amendment to the Constitution in 2004. A comprehensive review had also been carried out to bring domestic legislation into line with the provisions of the Convention.

46. The recent referendum on constitutional reform had led to an expansion of human rights and

fundamental freedoms in Turkey. Children were now guaranteed “adequate protection and care” and their best interests were safeguarded by the Constitution. Provisions had been made for children to be heard, when deemed necessary, in all decision-making processes that concerned them. In an effort to protect children from abuse, certain provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on the Exercise of Children’s Rights and other international instruments had been integrated into the Constitution. Finally, every year Turkey celebrated Children’s Day on 23 April, which was also the anniversary of the inauguration of the Turkish Parliament, as a symbol of the importance accorded to children in his country.

47. **Ms. Alsaleh** (Syria) said that, within the framework of a national advancement programme, the Syrian Government had stepped up its efforts to provide support for young children and foster their development. Steps taken had included the convening of a meeting on early childhood in Syria and a forum on child protection. Moreover, Syria had recently hosted the Regional Arab Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which had brought together 150 experts in early childhood from across the Arab world and beyond. That conference had formulated a new, integrated approach to early childhood care and had also discussed the formulation of a regional framework based, *inter alia*, on coordination between stakeholders in the early childhood field.

48. In 2010, Syria had also hosted a conference on Arab adolescence to evaluate the second Arab Action Plan on Childhood, 2004-2015. That conference had submitted recommendations on health and security, capacity-building, participation and protection to the Fourth High-Level Arab Conference on the Rights of the Child. It had also recommended that protection of children living under foreign occupation should be integrated into the Action Plan and a fund established to provide those children with assistance. Arab countries must emphasize the situation of children living under foreign occupation in their interactions with relevant international bodies.

49. Israel’s occupation of the Syrian Golan gravely impacted children’s rights there. Israel disregarded all internationally binding instruments, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, it

sought to undermine the Golan’s Arab identity and supplant it with the identity, language and culture of the occupier, by imposing school curricula, systematically neglecting health, education and social services and denying all services which Syria wished to provide to its citizens there. Syria called upon the international community to condemn all such illegal violations, intervene on behalf of the children of the citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan and insist on access on the part of international committees to monitor the plight of people there.

50. Media coverage of Israel’s grave violations of children’s rights in the occupied Palestinian territory had been deeply shocking. Unfortunately, elements of the Western media rarely provided impartial coverage of the situation on the ground for children living under Israeli occupation, despite the many reports on that issue which had been adopted by the United Nations. A stand must be taken against Israel’s criminal actions in Palestine. Landmines and cluster bombs which killed innocent children in Palestine, Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan must be removed and the siege on Gaza, which had led to a huge rise in child mortality, must be lifted.

51. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that Montenegro supported efforts to encourage the universal ratification of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

52. His Government had signed a new Country Programme Action Plan with UNICEF in March 2010, which would contribute to the key objectives of promoting and protecting children’s rights, reforming child protection services and improving social inclusion. Cooperation between his Government and UNICEF had resulted in a detailed analysis of the situation of women and children in Montenegro, which had identified human, financial and organizational capacities and activities needed to ensure children’s rights.

53. A broad reform of the education system had been carried out, based on the principles of decentralization, equal rights to education for all and choice in accordance with individual abilities. The new system would address the needs of socially vulnerable groups. A strategy to develop preschool education had been implemented to increase coverage to 50 per cent of children by 2015, particularly those children without parental care, living in poverty, with disabilities, or in

conflict with the law, as well as Roma and refugee children. Elementary education for marginalized groups, particularly children with special needs or from the Roma, Ashkaelia and Egyptian population, was also a priority. The Act on education for children with special needs had achieved significant progress in providing educational programmes and support for those children. Social inclusion was one of the three pillars of the “Delivering as One” Integrated United Nations Programme for Montenegro.

54. His Government was dedicated to strengthening national capacities, finding better solutions to development issues and adopting the highest European and international child protection standards in order to improve child rights policies and monitoring at all levels.

55. **Mr. Koterec** (Slovakia) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the only core international human rights treaty that did not have a communications procedure in place, and his delegation believed that the lack of such a procedure undermined its implementation. The communications procedures established under other international instruments were open to children, of course, but they did not cover the full range and specificities of children’s rights as laid down in the Convention. The mandate of the Open-ended Working Group set up to examine the possibility of drafting another optional protocol to the Convention to provide a communications procedure had been extended by the Human Rights Council and the chairperson of the Working Group had been asked to prepare a proposal for a draft optional protocol. He called on all Member States to participate actively in the process to elaborate the new optional protocol and thus give children the respect and attention they deserved.

56. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that her Government had adopted a comprehensive approach to favour children’s well-being and development. National legislation sought to protect children from harm and defend their best interests, as well as encourage children to respect democratic values. Tunisia was committed to creating a world fit for children and to that end it had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Similarly, the Government had introduced a Child Protection Code in 1995 and set up a High Council for Children to examine State policy in that area. The first Cabinet meeting of each new administrative year was dedicated to assessing the

situation of children, the concerns that they faced and ways to assist them.

57. Children and in particular, children with disabilities, were given the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills for today’s digital and information society through the activities of the National Children’s Computer Centre. Counselling units for adolescents had been opened in schools and the Observatory for Information, Training, Documentation and Study for the Protection of the Rights of the Child had been established in 2002 to oversee childcare policy. Family and child courts had been set up and child protection commissioners nominated to strengthen child protection mechanisms.

58. Finally, she called on Member States to exchange best practices in child policy on national, regional and international levels, to ensure that children from all over the world had common educational values.

59. **Ms. Tiendrébéogo/Sanon** (Burkina Faso) said that the situation of children in Burkina Faso had improved, but much remained to be done: school enrolment rates had increased, but 39.3 per cent of children still did not have access to education in 2006. Infant and child mortality rates had significantly decreased in the last decade but the main causes of infant mortality were still endemic and epidemic diseases. Despite numerous activities and initiatives to protect and promote the rights of children and mothers, children continued to be the victims of trafficking and exploitation.

60. To tackle those issues, Burkina Faso had adopted a strategic policy to protect and promote the rights of the child in 2009, based on three main aims. The first focused on strengthening key legal institutions in the field and decentralization, particularly in the most impoverished areas, as well as awareness-raising campaigns to encourage people to abandon social practices that were harmful to children. The second prioritized access for children and their mothers to basic social services, including education, literacy, health and drinking water, and was also concerned with stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS. The third aim was to develop children’s and women’s economic activity through vocational training.

61. Finally, he expressed his delegation’s support for the recommendations made in the Secretary-General’s report and hoped that they would soon be turned into

specific actions to foster children's development and well-being.

62. **Ms. Sulimani** (Sierra Leone) said that her country had recently launched a free health-care initiative for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under the age of 5, to provide accessible, affordable, quality health-care services to all its children. The Government had developed a five-year strategic plan to deliver essential health services, including emergency obstetrics, newborn care and immunization, to all regions of the country. Insecticide-treated bednets were being provided to reduce deaths due to malaria, particularly among young children.

63. Sexual and gender-based violence committees had been set up all over the country to ensure adherence to all legislation related to child rights issues. The Child Rights Act, which was a domestication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, had provided the opportunity to bring laws and policies into line with international standards. The international definition of a child as any person under 18 years of age had been endorsed by the Government.

64. There were child welfare committees that had mandates to prevent and respond to all cases of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. In partnership with UNICEF, a referral protocol and two pilot safe homes had been developed to address the health, psychosocial, security and legal needs of child victims. The Government was mapping sexual and gender-based violence service providers across the country to monitor and ascertain their effectiveness.

65. All female and disabled students admitted to tertiary institutions received grants. The Government also paid tuition fees for all girls in approved junior secondary schools. Education reform was under way, changes were being made in teacher recruitment and classroom overcrowding was being addressed.

66. Stringent measures had been adopted to protect children from all forms of exploitation and abuse. A task force identified victims, provided temporary shelter and reunited them with their families. Perpetrators were prosecuted, and some convictions had been secured. While not yet a signatory to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption,

Sierra Leone had implemented a moratorium on intercountry adoption and set up a committee to review the 1989 Adoption Act.

67. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had recently considered the initial report of Sierra Leone on the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Sierra Leone faced challenges in the fields of health and education. Facilities were inadequate, especially in remote areas. Schools lacked qualified health practitioners. Nutrition in schools required more attention. Inadequate health care, especially for children in remote villages, as well as inadequate water and sanitation facilities, all posed major challenges to the ability of the country to implement fully the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

68. **Mr. Murongwana** (South Africa) said that violence was a harsh reality for millions of children. A protective legislative framework guaranteeing the protection of the rights of children and criminalizing those offences was needed. New approaches informed by objective realities were required to protect children who were victims of or at risk of sale and/or sexual exploitation must include sustainable and context-specific strategies. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict provided guidelines on how to address the protection of children in armed conflict.

69. South African legislation on the protection and promotion of the rights of children was aligned with the international human rights instruments on children. Great efforts were being directed towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the Goal on universal education. President Zuma of South Africa had initiated the 1GOAL Education for All campaign before the start of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) 2010 World Cup. The Secretary-General of the United Nations had signed on to the campaign, as had other world leaders. They had agreed to work towards a breakthrough on global education funding to assist poor children. To address challenges in the area of children's rights, South Africa had established a Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities.

70. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka) said that his country had been committed to primary health care and education

for all since its independence in 1948. The Convention on the Rights of the Child set a baseline for its commitments to its children. A few weeks previously, Sri Lanka had submitted its third and fourth periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and it was in the process of setting up a monitoring committee to ensure prompt follow-up on the CRC recommendations.

71. Sri Lanka had been among the first Member States to volunteer to set up a national task force to monitor and report on child conscription in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005). It had closely cooperated with the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict and with UNICEF in implementing a zero tolerance policy on child recruitment. Since the end of armed conflict in May 2009, a total of 667 former child soldiers had undergone rehabilitation and been reintegrated into their families and communities.

72. Education in Sri Lanka was free from kindergarten to university, and the Government also provided some of the school books, uniforms and a midday meal. As a result, primary school enrolment stood at 97.5 per cent, and literacy between the ages of 15 and 24 was around 95 per cent. Of its schools, 3,500 had computer centres. Health care was also free. Child mortality was about 11.3 per 1,000 live births and maternal mortality, 39.3 per 100,000 live births.

73. Sri Lanka's commitment to an incremental, multidisciplinary approach to child's rights goals was evidenced by the legal improvements, policies and action plans adopted and implemented over many years. Most recently, it had approved the National Plan of Action for Children (2010-2015), which addressed geographical disparities and the needs of children in conflict zones and improved the overall coordinating mechanism for children's action plans. He drew particular attention to Sri Lanka's 2006 adoption of a national plan of action to address child sex tourism, as well as a code of conduct for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in the travel and tourism trade, one result of which had been the establishment of a national child helpline in 2008. Sri Lanka had also set up a juvenile court in Colombo, which in August 2010 had ordered the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission to ban pornographic websites and movies with adult content.

74. **Mr. Feleke** (Ethiopia) said that his country had been implementing interventions in basic health care, education and protection services for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Ethiopia had adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and had recently signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The federal Constitution and the constitutions of all the regional states of Ethiopia contained provisions on the rights of children. The Constitution enshrined protection from corporal punishment and exploitative practices which were hazardous or harmful to the education, health or well-being of the child. Under the Civil Code, children under the age of 18 could not be recruited for military service. A new ministry for women, children and youth had been established, which was responsible for coordinating the activities of sectoral ministries with regard to the implementation of the rights of the child.

75. The Government had adopted education, health and cultural policies that were instrumental in defending and promoting the rights of children. Access to health care had improved considerably, especially health services for mothers and children, and there had been extensive immunization campaigns against six major deadly diseases. Infant mortality in Ethiopia had been reduced to 77 per 1,000 live births, and the mortality rate for children under 5 had been reduced to 123 per 1,000 live births. There were outreach programmes to educate the public on hygiene, nutrition and preventive measures. The health of newborns had improved thanks to a prevention strategy for neonatal and childhood illnesses. The skills of health personnel had been enhanced.

76. One fourth of the federal budget was dedicated to education. Eighty-five per cent of the education budget was for primary education in rural areas. Much work had been done to expand education in the pastoralist areas. Primary school enrolment was expected to reach 100 per cent before the Millennium Development Goals deadline.

77. While holistic and comprehensive strategies were important for addressing the range of problems children faced, targeted programmes for orphans, children in single-parent households and children not living with their biological parents were also valuable.

78. **Ms. Ivanović** (Serbia) said that her country had recently presented its initial reports on implementation of both Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had formally endorsed the Paris Commitments and Principles. The country programme document for Serbia for the period 2011-2015, which had just been adopted by UNICEF, identified positive developments in health, education, social services reform and juvenile justice. Challenges remained with regard to the social inclusion of vulnerable children and overcoming disparities related to the poor, the Roma, rural and disabled children.

79. A comprehensive national system for the protection and promotion of the rights of the child in Serbia included the Council on the Rights of the Child, established by the Government, and the Working Group for Child Rights of the National Assembly. One of the deputies of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia was responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of the child.

80. The National Plan of Action for Children for the period 2004-2015, devised by the Council on the Rights of the Child, defined overall national policy with regard to children, drawing on the four basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the right to life, survival and development; the best interests of the child; protection from discrimination; and the right to participation. The goals of the National Plan were to reduce child poverty, improve health and education for all children, improve the status and promote the rights of children with disabilities, protect the rights of children without parental care, protect children against abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence and strengthen national capacity to address the problems of children.

81. The General Protocol on Child Protection from Abuse and Neglect, adopted in 2005, aimed to create an effective network for a coordinated procedure to protect children from abuse and neglect, enabling proper intervention and recovery. In 2006, special protocols for the protection of children from abuse and neglect had been adopted for institutions of social protection, health and educational institutions, as well as for the police and the judiciary.

82. The National Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence, adopted in 2008, had two goals: development of a safe and secure environment in which the right of each child to be

protected from all forms of violence would be ensured, and the establishment of a national system of prevention and protection of children against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. Partnerships with the private sector and the media had been important in the implementation, in cooperation with UNICEF, of a programme to make schools safer.

83. **Mr. Sayeed** (India) said that his country had one of the world's largest programmes for early childhood care and education. It provided preschool non-formal education for children up to the age of 6 and broke the cycle of malnutrition, morbidity and mortality by providing supplementary nutrition, immunization and health check-ups. In 2009, over 70 million children and 15 million pregnant women and lactating mothers had benefited from the programme. As the programme had a direct impact on the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by two thirds the mortality rate among children under 5, funding for the programme had been increased by a factor of four in the previous five years.

84. As a result of the recent adoption of a law on free and compulsory education, all children were now entitled to enrolment, attendance and completion of eight years of elementary education before the age of 14. The same law required all private schools to reserve one quarter of places for children from poor families (with tuition fees reimbursed by the State). There was also a provision for special training of school dropouts and for improvement of school infrastructure and teacher-student ratios. Elementary education covered the entire country, with an emphasis on education for girls. Funds allocated for education had increased as part of the effort to attain universal education.

85. A new programme had been launched the previous year to provide a safe environment for children needing care and protection, children in conflict and other vulnerable children. It unified existing child protection schemes in the areas of juvenile justice, street children and assistance to homes to promote in-country adoption. The new scheme was designed to provide improved and more accessible child protection services and to raise awareness about child rights. It included a dedicated, around-the-clock telephone helpline for children in distress and adults calling on their behalf.

86. Policies to ban sex-selective abortion and child marriage would help to reduce the vulnerability of

girls. National Girl Child Day had been marked each year on 24 January since 2009, to highlight the problems faced by girls.

87. A ban on employment of children below the age of 14 was strictly enforced. A national commission had been established in 2007 to provide speedy trials of offenders who committed crimes against children.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.