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Provisional summary record of the 44th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 26 July 2011, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Rosocha (Acting Vice-President)..... (Slovakia)

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* Sub-items considered together.

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Editing Unit, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

In the absence of Mr. Kapambwe (Zambia), Mr. Rosocha (Slovakia), Acting Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Coordination, programme and other questions (*continued*)

(c) International cooperation in the field of informatics (E/2011/101)

Economic and environmental questions

(b) Science and technology for development (A/66/64-E/2011/77, A/66/67-E/2011/79 and A/66/77-E/2011/103 and E/2011/31)

Mr. Santiago (Officer-in-Charge, Information and Communication Technology Service, United Nations Office at Geneva (ICTS/UNOG)), speaking on behalf of Mr. Choi Soon-hong, Assistant Secretary-General and Chief Information Technology Officer, introduced the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation in the field of informatics (E/2011/101). The report had been prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/38, in which the President had been requested to convene the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics for one more year to enable it to continue its efforts to act as a bridge with regard to information technology between the evolving needs of Member States and the actions of the Secretariat. It highlighted the continuing cooperation of the Working Group and the Secretariat, which had resulted in practical enhancements in the area of information and communications technology (ICT) that facilitated the work of Member States, observers of the United Nations and the NGOs accredited to the United Nations.

ICT played a critical support role at the United Nations; the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) was responsible for the secretariat-wide ICT strategy, in close cooperation with ICT governance groups. Over the previous year, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group and the Secretariat had maintained effective cooperation: OICT had facilitated the Working Group's meetings and provided regular updates on the Secretariat's ICT strategic programmes. With the Working Group's guidance, the Secretariat had made fuller use of collaboration tools to meet the needs of the General Assembly Committees. CandiWeb had been successfully used to support the election processes of United Nations bodies.

The content of the much-used deleGATE website (www.un.int), jointly developed by OICT and the Department of Public Information (DPI), came from the Secretariat's Intranet site iSeek. OICT provided website hosting services and a web content management system for 62 permanent missions along with e-mail services, by supporting approximately 1,200 e-mail accounts on four dedicated servers running the standard system used at Headquarters.

In cooperation with DPI and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, OICT had fully implemented the Google Search engine for the Official Document System (ODS). A new interface had been deployed to permit advanced full-text and metadata searches of all ODS documents in the six official languages. In 2010, the e-Subscription portal (<http://undocs.org>) had been launched to meet the Member States' needs.

The Working Group and the Secretariat continued to explore ways of establishing a forum where the diplomatic community and the Secretariat could exchange information and views on using ICT in the Secretariat; in 2010, the DiploFoundation E-diplomacy Initiative

had been launched in New York. The Secretary-General looked forward to the extension of the Working Group's mandate.

Mr. Hamdi (Head, Science, Technology and ICT Branch, Division on Technology and Logistics, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) introduced the Secretary-General's report on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) at the regional and international levels (A/66/64-E/2011/77). The report had been prepared by UNCTAD with input from other United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the regional commissions.

Mobile telephone networks were accessible to 90 per cent of the world's population, including 75 per cent of people in rural areas. According to ITU estimates, the number of mobile subscriptions worldwide had been almost 5.3 billion at the end of 2010, three quarters of them in developing countries. New mobile applications, including m-health and m-transactions, had been spreading while smartphones were increasingly used to access the Internet, offering easier access and faster growth in Internet use in developing countries. The nature of the digital divide was changing, however: broadband access had been growing faster in developed countries than in developing countries, posing a challenge since the social and economic development of every country would depend on affordable access to broadband networks.

The Internet continued to evolve very fast: the number of users worldwide had grown by a further 12 per cent in 2010 to stand at around 2 billion – twice the number in 2005; more than half were in developing countries. Since WSIS, the amount of user-generated content in “Web 2.0” had grown while the number of users of the most prominent social networking website, Facebook, had gone up to over 500 million. Both developments had shifted the balance between publishers and consumers of content, enabling more people to express their views freely online. They had probably been major sources of information exchange during the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia and were likely to increase their impact in the future.

Concerns over data privacy and security continued to grow, Governments and businesses were concerned about risks to national security, commercial confidentiality and industrial espionage, while citizens and civil society organizations worried about the exploitation of personal data by government agencies and businesses and the risk of identity theft and other fraudulent abuse. Another innovation with possible implications for privacy and security was cloud computing, which was expected to go beyond information technology. Its success might depend on whether businesses and governments could allay anxieties about the privacy and security implications for confidential data and rethink the security requirements of data management.

ICTs should be seen not only in terms of infrastructure and connectivity but also as enablers for developing production capacity, education and health. Policymakers and their partners should do more to leverage technology, while development policies should be more focused on ICTs and other technologies. It was important to engage the private sector to form broader development partnerships, helping to overcome the digital divide and enabling small and medium-sized enterprises in the developing world to make productive use of ICTs. More should be done not only to improve access to ICTs but also to make their content more relevant.

The WSIS Forum, organized annually by ITU, had become one of the world's most important ICT events. Thanks to its inclusiveness, openness and thematic focus, it allowed many stakeholders to discuss issues related to the WSIS process. The Internet Governance

Forum (IGF) had been recognized as another useful mechanism for dialogue with Internet stakeholders while incubating ideas that helped to shape policy decisions while promoting discussion, fostering partnerships and enhancing information-sharing.

The 2010 edition of the *World Telecommunication/ICT Development Report (WTDR)*, published by ITU, pointed to significant weaknesses in the WSIS targets and proposed new indicators while suggesting updating objectives in the light of the growth of mobile telephony. It provided an opportunity for more effective tracking of progress towards achieving WSIS outcomes, which should enhance understanding of developments and improve strategic planning for ICTs at the national and regional levels.

He then introduced the report (A/66/67-E/2011/79) prepared by the Chair of the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), in response to requests by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2010/2, and by the General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/65/141. At the first two meetings held by the Working Group, in early 2011, the Group had sought, compiled and reviewed inputs from Member States and other stakeholders on improvements to the IGF, in line with the mandate set out in the Tunis Agenda. Owing to the wealth of information, the complexity and political sensitivity of the subject and a significant divergence of views among Member States, the Working Group had not been able, within the short time frame allotted to it, to finalize a set of recommendations on improving the IGF. It was therefore suggested that the Working Group should extend its deliberations beyond the fourteenth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) and present its final report at the fifteenth session.

Mr. Spearing (Senior Governance and Public Administration Officer, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)), speaking on behalf of Ms. Haiyan Qian, Director, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, introduced the Secretary-General's report on enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet (A/66/77-E/2011/103). It described the outcome of the open and inclusive consultations involving all Member States and other stakeholders, organized by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs in the latter half of 2010. Opinions had been solicited from all Member States, 150 international organizations and 3,500 civil society and private sector entities. Stakeholders had been given the chance to express their views in writing or at a meeting held in New York in December 2010.

The consultations had revealed that there was no agreement on what enhanced cooperation was and how it should be achieved but they had clarified that many stakeholders wanted enhanced cooperation, despite disagreement over the machinery for achieving it. Participants had commented on the public policy issues of concern, expressed their opinions on the institutional arrangements for discussing them and reflected on the role of the Secretary-General and other international actors.

The Internet continued to be seen as a vital element of the people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society envisaged at WSIS, while its increasing centrality to economic activity and social relations raised important questions of international security, human rights and law. Although opinions on the most appropriate mechanisms diverged, there was agreement that policy authority was the sovereign right of States, whereas governments had an obligation to consult with civil society and the private sector on decisions affecting them, and enhanced cooperation mechanisms must take that multi-stakeholder dynamic into account. Although closely related, policymaking, technical standards and day-to-day operations should be addressed separately. Moreover, the consultations had reaffirmed the facilitating role of the United Nations while recognizing the contribution of ITU and other intergovernmental organizations.

The General Assembly had welcomed the Council's initiative in its resolution 65/141 and reiterated the urgent need to pursue the process towards enhanced cooperation in accordance with the Tunis Agenda. DESA was ready to offer the Council its support in that process.

Mr. Flores Bermúdez (Observer for Honduras) said that since knowledge and development went hand in hand, coordinating national and international ICT efforts was the best way to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Although mobile telephone networks were accessible to 90 per cent of the world's population, their use in the health sector lagged behind, especially in rural areas, and there was scope for more use in trade and finance. In his country, the number of households with mobile telephones had increased from 650,000 in 2006 to almost 1,400,000 in 2010, and was still rising; the Honduran Government was taking steps to make the best use of that coverage.

Broadband Internet access, which benefited social networks, trade, health and finance, was currently seen as a right. As it was also an important tool for combating climate change and empowering vulnerable groups, there should be more emphasis on developing the necessary infrastructure. Honduras agreed with the Broadband Commission for Digital Development on the need for a trans-sectoral approach but the Government would need support from the private sector and the international community to widen access. Cyber security continued to be a concern but Honduras recognized the hard work achieved under the auspices of ITU and the degree of international coordination being introduced in all sectors.

Children and young people should be a greater factor of cohesion in the international community's work on ICTs and thus be given better opportunities in education and productive activities. In countries like his, where a large share of the population was under 18, it was not just an investment in the future but a question of survival. Although the Honduran Government was already using ICTs in education, it would need international cooperation to do more.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) had organized regional meetings, exchanged best practices, supported policymaking, built capacity and cooperated on regional projects. He acknowledged, in particular, its help for small and medium-sized enterprises to overcome their ICT deficiencies and its support for the building of the Central American Information Highway. He wished to highlight the work of three other United Nations agencies: ITU for its effective leadership; the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) for its contribution to modernizing the intellectual property system in Central America; and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) for its Business Information Centres programme, which had been particularly successful in rural areas.

Mr. Sammis (United States of America) expressed his country's appreciation of the steps taken to meet the commitments made at WSIS, in particular with respect to achieving the MDGs. The main accomplishment of the United Nations had been the success of the IGF, which had almost universal support among the stakeholders. Expressing gratitude to Kenya for hosting the next Forum, he said that the IGF permitted a constructive dialogue among all participants and served as a catalyst for creating other national, regional and international multi-stakeholder processes in keeping with the Tunis Agenda. Its flexible, self-evolving mechanisms had accommodated improvements without the need for fundamental change. The United States Government was committed to the multi-stakeholder model of Internet policymaking as the existing Internet was itself the result of hard work by multi-stakeholder organizations. Multi-stakeholder processes could manage issues with the speed and flexibility required in a rapidly changing environment, engaging all interested parties to encourage a broader and more creative involvement in problem solving.

The United States was committed to pursuing policies and relationships in support of the international consensus reached at WSIS. The Internet required distributed action and, given the size and diversity of the issue, all responsible parties must recognize their roles, while cooperating with and respecting the work of others.

Mr. Holtz (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) said that the IGF provided a new space for dialogue for all stakeholders on an equal footing on all Internet governance-related issues. It played a unique role in fostering sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet. Consistently high participation in the IGF illustrated the unique linkages it provided between intergovernmental organizations and governments, and among parliamentarians, industry, civil society and academia. The IGF was agile, open and inclusive. The review of its procedures, planning and structure aimed at enhancing its effectiveness must involve all stakeholders.

His Government supported the continuation of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) and the open consultations convened by the IGF Secretariat, and it hoped that the IGF Chair and Executive Coordinator could be confirmed promptly. Welcoming the efforts of the Working Group on Improvements to the IGF, he said that the Group should continue its work through 2011 and 2012 with the participation of all stakeholders. It would also be useful to build on the progress made with regard to developing country stakeholder participation in the run-up to the Sixth Annual IGF Meeting in Nairobi. The first IGF Meeting to be held in Sub-Saharan Africa was an important milestone, and he commended the Kenyan Government for its dedicated preparatory work. His Government fully supported the Commonwealth Cybercrime Initiative, which would be presented in Nairobi. It would help build institutional capacity in developing Commonwealth countries and illustrate the IGF's role as a global forum to address pressing issues such as cybercrime.

Ms. Ravhandalala (Observer for South Africa), also speaking on behalf of India and Brazil, said that the global Internet regime must be multilateral, democratic and transparent. A formal platform was needed, under the auspices of the United Nations, to discuss cross-cutting public policy issues in an integrated manner. The identification of such a platform within an existing agency, or the creation of a new one, would help address the growing number of critical public policy Internet issues, realize the development objectives of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, and complement the discussions of the IGF.

The Tunis Agenda had highlighted the need for equal participation by developed and developing countries in international Internet public policymaking, as well as the need for consultation with all stakeholders. It was paradoxical that international governance of the Internet, which was universally acknowledged as a powerful catalyst for democracy, openness and inclusion, that continued to lack equitable representation, transparency and inclusiveness. Global Internet governance must be based on the principles underpinning the United Nations and universally accepted tenets of multilateralism.

While not much progress had been made in the implementation of the key paragraphs of the Tunis Agenda, the number of Internet users was growing exponentially. The situation had raised critical policy issues such as Internet stability, interoperability, accessibility, network neutrality, cyber security, resource management, and the use of the Internet as a tool for socio-economic growth and development. Since there was no United Nations platform for the development of internationally agreed guidelines, the dialogue on enhanced cooperation could fill that gap by promoting global solutions to cross-cutting Internet issues in a systematic, coherent and integrated manner.

The call for a designated global forum to discuss Internet-related public policy issues was not intended to exclude other, non-United Nations stakeholders or as a substitute

for the IGF. India, Brazil and South Africa were thriving democracies engaged in ongoing dialogue on Internet governance with national stakeholders. They recognized that the Internet was a truly global facility and that governments could not take decisions unilaterally. Any intergovernmental United Nations platform must serve as a coordination mechanism for dialogue between the full range of public and private stakeholders. The enhanced cooperation initiative and the IGF were two distinct but complementary and interconnected processes. A nodal coordinating agency for Internet issues must be established within the United Nations as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Toro Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the work of the Council aimed at enhancing the ICT capacities of Member States within the United Nations community was fully consistent with his country's policy of democratization of ICT access. The global technological revolution had altered the relationship between governments and citizens, and between employers and employees, and that had implications on the working methods of the United Nations. His delegation had advocated the reinforcement of an open and democratic communication system within the United Nations and the establishment of internal links to improve communication and access to information by all Member States, including developing ones.

The absence of an integrated system for archiving, searching and recovering the information generated by the United Nations limited the Organization's capacity to translate such data into informed policy and management decisions. However, his Government placed high hopes on United Nations projects such as wireless Internet access (Wi-Fi) during the implementation of the Capital Master Plan. The CandiWeb project and the technical assistance and training provided to developing countries through the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) should also be maintained and strengthened.

ICT was an essential factor of development and should be reflected in national and multilateral poverty-alleviation strategies. National and multilateral e-strategies should be developed, identifying priority areas for investment and policymaking, including coordination of infrastructure development plans. Regional alliances must also be fostered in order to reduce the transaction costs of projects with shared outcomes. He called on the United Nations media to focus on a deeper knowledge of ICTs in developing country contexts.

Mr. Quintanilla Román (Observer for Cuba) said that the role of the IGF should be further enhanced. Global Internet governance was best discussed in the framework of the United Nations General Assembly, in addition to other forums. The IGF should focus on resolving important public policy issues, such as unilateral control of critical Internet resources and options for broadening access. It should also move beyond being a mere forum for debate and issue recommendations to intergovernmental organizations. The reform of the IGF should be based on the Tunis Agenda, remain under the auspices of the United Nations and maintain its multisectoral nature. More should be done to enhance the effective participation of developing countries, especially LDCs, in Internet governance. It was also important to create an enabling environment for the sustainable development of information technology infrastructures in developing States.

Mr. Almazyed (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation looked forward to enhanced cooperation on public policymaking relating to the Internet. Referring to paragraph 49 of the Declaration of Principles "Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new Millennium", he recalled that policy authority for Internet-related issues was the sovereign right of States. Paragraph 68 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society recognized that all governments should have an equal role and responsibility for international Internet governance. It had been agreed to pursue Internet governance through both the enhanced cooperation process and the IGF, whose roles should be complementary.

Recalling paragraph 71 of the Tunis Agenda, he commented on the delay in taking concrete action to develop an enhanced cooperation process. The process was crucial to enable governments, on an equal footing and in open consultation with other stakeholders, to carry out their roles and responsibilities in regard to Internet-related public policymaking. To ensure maximum and equitable representation of all governments, the enhanced cooperation process should be initiated and institutionalized by a member of the United Nations family.

Mr. Diop (Senegal) said that ICT cooperation played a crucial role as a driver of economic and commercial exchange. It also facilitated citizenship education and democratic participation. Senegal had therefore stepped up efforts in recent years to broaden access to new technologies, including by reducing or eliminating import duties on ICT equipment and providing ICT training in schools and universities. Welcoming the efforts of the international community to bridge the digital divide, he called on all State and non-State stakeholders to contribute to the Global Digital Solidarity Fund. Closing the digital divide would make an important contribution to poverty eradication and literacy development.

Mr. Tootoonchian (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran), referring to articles 35 and 68 of the Tunis Agenda, said that Internet-related public policymaking was the sovereign right of States. All governments should have an equal role and responsibility for international Internet governance. Paragraph 69 of the Tunis Agenda recognized the need for enhanced cooperation to enable governments to carry out their roles and responsibilities on an equal footing. The IGF and enhanced cooperation should be two distinct processes. In order to operationalize the long overdue enhanced cooperation process, an intergovernmental global mechanism should be mandated to address international public policy issues pertaining to Internet governance. The current trend of further marginalizing developing countries in the area of international Internet governance must be reversed.

Mr. Selli (Observer for the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)) said that business valued the opportunity to participate in the activities of the CSTD, including its annual review of progress on WSIS outcomes. The ICC fully supported the draft decisions aimed at extending the participation of business sector entities, academic and technical entities, non-governmental and civil society entities in the work of the CSTD. It also supported the draft resolution on assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the WSIS (draft resolution I) and the draft resolution on science and technology for development (draft resolution II).

She noted with appreciation the contribution of IGF host countries and their commitment to multi-stakeholder participation in Internet governance, and the ICC looked forward to participating in the first IGF Meeting to be held in Africa in 2011. The IGF was unique and made a valuable contribution to the multi-stakeholder discussion and efforts to address Internet policy issues.

The ICC strongly supported the continuation of the CSTD Working Group on Improvements to the IGF with its current multi-stakeholder format, and it believed that the enhanced cooperation process should also draw on all stakeholders. While access to ICT was growing, the business community considered that additional efforts were required. The kind of information sharing, collaboration and exchange of experience emerging from the IGF and other multi-stakeholder endeavours could contribute to the development of policies and practices that would broaden access to ICT and the Internet. Her organization looked forward to engaging with other stakeholders to ensure a more inclusive, development-oriented and people-centred information society.

Mr. Seidler (Internet Society) welcomed the draft decision proposed at the fourteenth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development

(CSTD) on the extension until 2015 of current arrangements for the participation of academic and technical entities in the Commission's work, as well as other draft decisions regarding the involvement of the business sector, civil society and entities that had been unable to take part in the World Summit on the Information Society. It also welcomed the fact that the means had been found to allow the participation of all stakeholders on an equal footing in discussions of the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum.

Internet Society, which was the institutional home of the Internet Architecture Board and Internet Engineering Task Force, the main organizations for developing Internet standards, welcomed the report by the Secretary-General on enhanced cooperation (E/2011/103). Internet governance was a collaborative process involving many organizations and therefore required no centralized process.

Action on recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development E/2011/31

The President drew attention to the draft resolutions and decisions proposed respectively in Sections A and B of Chapter I of the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

Draft resolution I entitled "Assessment of the progress made in the implementation and the follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society"

Draft resolution II entitled "Science and technology for development"

Draft resolutions I and II were adopted.

Draft decision I entitled "Extension of the mandate of the Gender Advisory Board of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development"

Draft decision II entitled "Participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society entities in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development"

Draft decision III entitled "Participation of academic and technical entities in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development"

Draft decision IV entitled "Participation of business sector entities, including the private sector, in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development"

Draft decision V entitled "Participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society entities not accredited to the World Summit on the Information Society in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development regarding the discussion about the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit"

Draft decision VI entitled "Report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its fourteenth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the fifteenth session of the Commission"

Draft decisions I, II, III, IV, V and VI were adopted.

Economic and environmental questions (*continued*)**(I) Women and development** (E/2011/27)**Social and human rights questions** (*continued*)**(a) Advancement of women** (E/2011/27 and E/2011/105)

The President said that agenda items 13 (I) and 14 (a) would be considered jointly.

Ms. Shevchenko (Ukraine) said that gender mainstreaming was an integral part of State policy in her country. Provisions of legislation enacted in 2005 on equal rights and opportunities for men and women had been incorporated in various five-year national action plans. The appointment of the Ombudsman's representative on gender equality in 2010 had been an important development for the advancement of women. Society's perception of the role of men and women was changing and 40 per cent of young families divided up gender roles equally.

Priority areas that still had to be addressed included: achieving gender parity in higher legislative and executive offices; ensuring gender equality at work; decreasing the gap in income between men and women; and changing gender stereotypes. The Government had drafted a concept document as the basis for meeting those objectives by 2016.

Ukraine considered gender mainstreaming to be a crucial issue for its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe between May and November 2011. In that context, a conference on developing national mechanisms to ensure equal rights between men and women would be held in Kyiv in October 2011.

Ukraine welcomed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. It also welcomed the Equal Opportunities and Women's Rights in Ukraine programme for 2008–2011, which was led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and co-financed by the European Union (EU) and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Mr. Rakovskiy (Russian Federation) said that UN-Women should work hand in hand with the Commission on the Status of Women. While endorsing the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2011–2013, he said that its objectives needed to be made clear in order to achieve the desired results. Accountability for the use of its resources was essential. The work of UN-Women should be evenly distributed across countries, to the exclusion of none, and its country programmes should only be implemented upon the request of the States concerned. Equally, the establishment of UN-Women offices needed to be carried out with their agreement.

The Russian Federation welcomed the closer attention being paid to gender issues in the context of economic and environmental matters. There should also be a focus on women and development. Economic equality and independence were essential for the achievement of gender equality, women's rights in the workplace and their ability to choose a profession. In the Russian Federation, more than 40 per cent of managers of small and medium-sized firms were women, and that percentage was growing. The Russian Federation agreed with the International Labour Organization on the need to create the necessary conditions to allow women to start their own businesses as a means of promoting full employment. The Russian Federation would continue to follow the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to which it had submitted its sixth and seventh periodic reports in 2010.

Ms. Chae (Republic of Korea) said that gender equality and the empowerment of women were vital for the achievement of sustainable development, human rights for all and peace. To that end, a more coordinated approach by the United Nations was necessary. The Government of the Republic of Korea welcomed the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2011–2013.

Mr. Sadoś (Observer for Poland), speaking on behalf of the EU, said that Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process aligned themselves with his statement.

The EU urged all member States to submit their reports in accordance with article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It hoped that conclusions reached by the Commission on the Status of Women on the question of access to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work, would provide a solid basis for more focused action in those areas. The EU attached great importance to gender equality as a fundamental principle, an integral and inseparable component of human rights and as a necessary condition for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Commission played an important role in setting standards and it was essential to avoid sterile discussions on concepts such as "gender" and "gender stereotypes", which had been agreed upon in the past. The establishment of UN-Women provided new opportunities to meet the challenges faced by women and girls around the world. It had already provided valuable support to the Commission, which ought to maintain a forward-looking approach.

Ms. Padilla (Mexico) said that her country agreed with the Commission on the importance of establishing national mechanisms for the advancement of women and endorsed its recommendations to member States on improving the living conditions and development of women.

The Government of Mexico promoted the empowerment of women and their integration in the economic and social development of the country through numerous programmes and strategies. Mothers received 98 per cent of benefits allocated to poor households. Efforts were being made to ensure the advancement of women and gender equality in the context of environment policy and to foster contact between women who were leaders in rural areas with a view to nurturing their management skills and social leadership. Measures had been taken to eliminate violence and discrimination in the workplace and to promote the economic independence of women. Almost 60 per cent of scholarships awarded by the National Higher Education Scholarships Programme were allocated to women.

The Government worked at the federal, state and municipal levels and in close collaboration with business women, civil society organizations and employer associations in order to promote the inclusion of women in development. In spite of those efforts, the Government recognized that much remained to be done to ensure the advancement of women in Mexico.

Ms. González (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her country had implemented a comprehensive policy of protection and promotion of women's rights with a view to ensuring the full involvement of women in the country's new model of production and development.

The draft resolution on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women in the Commission's report (E/2011/27) highlighted the particular difficulties faced by Palestinian women living under Israeli occupation. The right of Palestine to statehood, with its capital in East Jerusalem and within borders established by resolutions of the United Nations

Security Council and General Assembly, should be fulfilled as soon as possible. The violation of the rights of the Palestinian people was the main obstacle to the development and social integration of Palestinian women.

Talks aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, for which the establishment of a Palestinian state was fundamental, should be resumed. Venezuela rejected the policy of the Israeli Government aimed at impeding the creation of an independent Palestinian state through the imposition of adverse economic and social conditions. Israel should comply with its international obligations, particularly under the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the international community should provide all the aid necessary to Palestinian women in order to improve their living conditions.

Mr. Diop (Senegal) said that much had been done to improve the socio-economic position of women in Senegal, including the implementation of a plan to facilitate access to land for women. Legislation had been passed in 2010 to promote gender parity in elected government bodies at the national, regional and local levels. He appealed for increased support by the international community for the efforts of developing countries to improve the situation of women, particularly in the areas of education and training.

Ms. Shuang (China) said that the advancement of women should be seen in the broader context of fostering global peace and development, and called on all countries to implement the provisions of the Beijing Declaration. The Government of China had made gender equality a priority policy matter and integrated women's rights into its national human rights action plan and economic development strategy. China supported the work of UN-Women and had fully implemented the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Ms. Tambunan (Observer for Indonesia) said that Indonesia recognized that women could contribute solutions to many development and social challenges. The situation of women should therefore be appropriately reflected in all policies and programmes. Women's access to health, education, information and economic opportunities should be increased, in order to empower them to participate in social development and bridge the gaps with regard to attaining the MDGs. The impact on women of multilateral trade and labour negotiations should be considered, and gender should be mainstreamed into global policies as a matter of course, in order to improve coherence in the United Nations system.

Indonesia continued to implement a development strategy based on growth, employment, poverty reduction and environmental protection. In 2010 the Government had issued a decree on the acceleration of the application of national development priorities, as a result of which 11 priority programmes had been put in place, including measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Indonesia had been conducting a national programme for independent community empowerment, which provided for targeted poverty reduction activities in poor communities. A special fund had been established to strengthen women's economic activities and develop their businesses by providing skills training, access to information and marketing. Since approximately 35 per cent of small- and medium-sized enterprises were owned and managed by women, Indonesia was committed to continuing to improve women's access to microcredit and microfinance, and had incorporated measures to promote economic opportunities for women into its economic stimulus strategy. One such opportunity was the establishment of village-based training and financial lending facilities for women's businesses.

The Government of Indonesia was aware of the importance of safeguarding the environment and managing climate change: a deficient natural environment would not sustain economic and social development. Indonesia therefore paid particular attention to the human and gender dimensions of preserving the environment and overcoming the

effects of climate change. Women were increasingly involved in negotiations and plans to meet those two objectives. Indonesia was firmly committed to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment and would continue to work with all relevant stakeholders to do so at the national and international levels.

Mr. Oyarce (Chile) expressed his delegation's gratitude to the Commission on the Status of Women for its efforts to improve women's access to education, training, science and technology and therefore to employment and decent work. The work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) should be integrated into the activities of all United Nations programmes and specialized agencies, and the UN-Women strategic plan for the period 2011–2013 could be particularly useful in that regard. Efforts should be made to strengthen national legislation, policies, programmes and mechanisms for the effective participation and empowerment of women. Women's political participation was essential for democracy. Gender should be integrated into all programmes and activities, since human rights, sustainable development, peace and security were relevant to the whole of society.

Recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-fifth session (E/2011/27)

Draft resolution entitled "Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women"

The President drew attention to Chapter I, Section B, of the report, which contained a draft resolution, entitled "Situation of assistance to Palestinian women". The draft resolution had been adopted by the Commission by a recorded vote of 26 to 2 with 8 abstentions. A roll-call vote on the draft resolution before the Council had been requested. He asked if any delegation wished to make a general statement.

Mr. Adam (Observer for Israel) said that the draft resolution on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women was a self-serving, political resolution. It was inappropriate to highlight the situation of Palestinian women above all other women. The draft resolution was politically motivated and did a disservice to the women of Palestine. If the sponsors and supporters of the draft resolution were truly concerned about Palestinian women, they would not have omitted to mention certain internal social conditions imposed on women within the Palestinian community. Recent reports by Human Rights Watch, for example, stated that Hamas had enlisted so-called morality police in the Gaza strip, who harassed, jailed and abused women for alleged infractions of Islamic law. Hamas also continued to assault NGOs that worked to promote and protect the empowerment of women.

The draft resolution also ignored the fact that over recent years, hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian women had met at the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre in Haifa, in order to share common strategies for success and foster a common vision of a brighter future. The Centre had been involved in training activities with Palestinian partners for over a decade. Each year around 25 Palestinian and Israeli women were brought together in a series of seminars for dialogue on forging friendships and building a common future. The Council should not be abused to promote the political interests of specific delegations.

Mr. Sados (Poland), speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU), said that the EU attached the utmost importance to the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, and continued to be deeply concerned about the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on all women and their families. While the draft resolution addressed a number of important issues, the EU considered that the country-specific questions covered in the draft should be dealt with in the context of the General Assembly. Any resolution dealing with the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women should adequately reflect the findings and recommendations contained in the relevant report by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Zuhairi (Observer for Palestine) said he believed the Council to be an appropriate forum for addressing the situation of women. The occupying power was violating the rights of the people of Palestine, in particular the right to self-determination, as enshrined in article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Israel must end its occupation if the women of Palestine were to be empowered. There could be no development in the absence of the promotion and protection of women's rights, in particular their right to participation. The situation of women in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was particularly grave: women were imprisoned in Israeli jails and killed by the occupying forces. His delegation called on Israel to end its occupation and grant all Palestinian people their basic human rights.

Mr. Sammis (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that the United States was disappointed with the draft resolution and would vote against it. The United States was committed to supporting the people of Palestine in practical and effective ways, as demonstrated by his Government's ongoing support for vital programmes to integrate gender into the public reform and development process and to create environments in which Palestinian women could advance and lead. The United States would continue to work with the Palestinian Authority, Israel and international partners to improve the lives of ordinary people. His delegation noted with concern that Hamas authorities had taken measures to restrict women's freedom of movement, and that the enforcement of so-called ethical crimes in Gaza appeared to be increasing. The United States was troubled by the fact that the Commission on the Status of Women had added political elements and one-sided condemnations to the draft, which detracted from the real challenges at hand. The United States would continue to pursue a comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on a two-State solution, and was committed to working with the Quartet to foster an agreement that would produce a just and lasting peace.

A roll-call vote was taken.

In favour:

Argentina, Bahamas, Chile, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Iraq, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zambia.

Against:

Canada, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Australia, Belgium, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The draft resolution was adopted by 24 votes to 2, with 21 abstentions.

Ms. Stone (Australia) said that Australia had consistently expressed its concern about the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including its concern for the situation of women. Australia had a strong interest in ensuring the equal participation of women in society and the integration of a gender perspective into international assistance programmes. Her delegation had decided to abstain from voting on the resolution, owing to its concern that the resolution unnecessarily introduced political issues into the work of the Council, did not reflect the responsibilities of all parties, and did not contribute constructively to the goal of a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Australia welcomed recent improvements in the economic and security conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and urged both parties to ensure those gains continued. Direct negotiations should be held on final status issues, and both parties should refrain

from action that undermined trust. Australia had been a strong and consistent supporter of the peace process and had made considerable contributions to humanitarian assistance and institution-building activities in Palestine.

Draft decision entitled “Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-fifth session and provisional agenda for the fifty-sixth session of the Commission”

The President drew attention to Chapter I, Section C, of the report, which contained a draft decision entitled “Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-fifth session and provisional agenda for the fifty-sixth session of the Commission”.

The draft decision was adopted.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.