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Chair: Ms. Critchlow. (Guyana)

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In the absence of Mr. Haniff (Malaysia), Ms. Critchlow (Guyana), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (continued)

(a) Advancement of women (continued) (A/66/38, 99, 181, 212 and 215)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (continued) (A/66/211)

1. **Ms. Al-Raisi** (Oman) said that over the previous four decades, Omani women had realized numerous achievements in the political, development, economic, social, cultural and media fields. Omani legislation relating to women's issues, which emanated from the tolerant Islamic Sharia, granted women all their rights, enabling them to play a role in development alongside men and strengthening their national role in different areas of work. It also allowed women to achieve significant progress in parliamentary life, empowering women, promoting their participation in the decision-making process and enabling them to reach positions of authority, which was considered a fundamental part of attaining gender equality.

2. Omani women had held high Government and administrative positions. On Oman's national women's day on 17 October, activities included workshops, round tables, exhibitions and honouring women pioneers in development. Her country had adopted a number of legislative measures to protect and ensure respect for the human rights of women and girls, based on the principles of gender equality, non-discrimination, and equal rights and responsibilities of all citizens set forth in the Omani Basic Law. Moreover, the Government had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2006 and submitted its initial report under the Convention in 2009.

3. Since 1997, when women had become eligible for election to the Consultative Council, the percentage of women officials elected had risen dramatically, and there were 15 women currently serving on the State Council, whose members were appointed by the Government. In accordance with its conviction that the protection of women was tantamount to the protection

of society, her country would spare no effort in guaranteeing women's rights in all development plans.

4. **Mr. Archondo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that half the members of the Bolivian presidential cabinet and more than 30 per cent of the members of the legislature were women. Political parties were required by law to present female and male candidates in alternation. His country had worked steadily to integrate gender perspectives into national development plans and to strengthen the role of women. The principles of gender equality were included in 25 articles of the new Bolivian Constitution.

5. Guaranteed rights included the right to a life free of violence; access by women to education, medical treatment, and social security; and the right of ownership of natural resources and land. The new Education Law enacted in December 2010, called for eliminating patriarchy from education, enforcement of human rights and eradication of violence. Under article 41 of the Constitution, Bolivian women were assured of safe and free pre- and post-natal maternity care and special treatment during pregnancy and at parturition. Vouchers were given to women who agreed to medical checkups and health monitoring for themselves and their infants.

6. Article 338 of the Constitution required recognition of the economic value of household work. It was necessary to change the belief that the only productive work was remunerated work. With a view to elimination of sexist work stereotypes, the Government was requiring that the media should provide more information about women's rights and stress the need to eradicate violence against women.

7. **Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia) said that, notwithstanding some progress since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration, rural women in the developing countries were still living in dire conditions and carrying the burden of agricultural production without legal protection or property ownership rights. It was urgent to expand access by women to local services, employment opportunities, and land rights and technologies. Since agriculture was the mainstay of the Ethiopian economy, the situation of rural women and the development challenges that they faced were particularly important.

8. The Food Security Programme and the national Energy Development Programme were among the initiatives begun, along with registration of land

ownership and encouragement of micro- and small-scale enterprises. Other initiatives included efforts to improve access to and the quality of family-planning and health services, reduce maternal mortality and increase the female school enrolment and retention rate.

9. **Mr. Askarov** (Uzbekistan) said that his Government's top priorities included ensuring the social protection and social and material well-being of mothers and children and the increased participation of women in national reforms. Recent electoral reforms had increased the political participation of women through a system of quotas that had required women to account for a minimum of 30 per cent of all candidates for deputies put forward by political parties. Following the last parliamentary elections, women had won 22 per cent of the seats in the lower house of parliament and 15 per cent of the Senate seats. Hundreds of women worked at all levels of government and thousands were active in the work of political parties. Many women were involved in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and in women's councils associated with local governments.

10. A special emphasis had been placed on supporting women entrepreneurs resulting in a growing number of women farmers and entrepreneurs with access to microcredit programmes. The financial independence that women gained through their business activities strengthened their role in society and in child-rearing. Women's education was another area of focus, with women accounting for over half of all students in the education system and for a large proportion of those pursuing advanced degrees and engaged in scientific research.

11. Both maternal and child mortality rates, which were key indicators of the level of national social and economic well-being, had been more than halved thanks to stable economic growth, a fivefold increase in government spending on social programmes and an improved quality of life. A large-scale national programme was under way to promote maternal and child health by ensuring equal access to health services for rural and urban populations, instituting a new system of emergency medical assistance, creating specialized medical centres and carrying out epidemiological monitoring and mass vaccination campaigns.

12. Uzbekistan had taken the lead in creating favourable conditions for women and mothers and had been recognized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as being a regional model for the implementation of programmes for the protection of mothers and children. An international symposium on Uzbekistan's national model for protecting maternal and child health would take place later in November 2011.

13. His Government supported the measures undertaken by the United Nations with respect to the advancement of women in accordance with the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It also welcomed the creation of UN-Women, which should play a key role in assisting Member States with implementing international standards for the protection of women's rights.

14. **Ms. Ambrose** (Canada), speaking on behalf of the CANZ countries (Australia, Canada and New Zealand), emphasized that the issue of violence against women and girls could not be addressed without the active engagement of men and boys. The CANZ group supported implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and other commitments with respect to that issue. A human rights-based approach and better promotion and protection of women's rights would help to reduce the unacceptably high global rate of maternal mortality and morbidity.

15. The high levels of discrimination still experienced by women and girls around the world were cause for concern. Member States should take active measures, including involving men and boys, to improve the status of women and girls, particularly with respect to safety, economic well-being and their status in society. The CANZ countries were seeking the support of all Member States for establishment of an International Day of the Girl, to combat persistent gender discrimination and barriers to women's and girls' development.

16. **Ms. Hassan** (Djibouti) said that gender equality was guaranteed by the Constitution of Djibouti and had been at the core of Government action for more than a decade. Her country's commitment to integrating women into development had also been expressed through its accession to all regional and international

agreements pertaining to human rights and promotion of the rights of women.

17. The Ministry of Women, Family Well-Being, and Social Affairs had been established in 1999 to oversee the elimination of gender inequalities. Representation of women in politics and decision-making had been the subject of various legislative reforms: the introduction of a quota system requiring that at least 10 per cent of either sex hold elective positions and senior Government positions, the adoption of a National Strategy for Women's Integration in Development, and the enactment of a Presidential decree requiring that at least 20 per cent of either sex hold top Government positions. Women currently constituted 14 per cent of the members of the national parliament, participated in local elections and sat in regional and municipal councils.

18. Notwithstanding improvement in female school attendance since 2000, problems persisted in rural areas and among the poor. Steps taken included the institution of a national Education for Girls Day (11 December), the establishment of "scholarships for girls" to encourage school registration, distribution of foodstuffs to rural families who sent their daughters to school, and establishment in remote inland regions of dormitories and cafeterias for secondary education students. Steps to mitigate lack of formal education and illiteracy among women had also been taken.

19. The Government was conducting information and awareness-raising campaigns on laws and procedures designed to protect women against violence. The traditional practice of female genital mutilation was still the most widespread type of violence against women in Djibouti. Education and legal measures were being taken to reduce that practice. The Government had established a national gender policy for 2012-2022, aimed at changing behaviour and achieving the structural changes necessary for gender equality.

20. **Mr. Rutilo** (Argentina) stressed the importance of the active and egalitarian participation by women in the public sphere in Argentina. Affirmative action measures, such as the 1991 law on quotas, had improved access by women to judgeships and the executive branch of Government and had increased participation of women in political life.

21. As of 2009, the percentage of women in Argentine political life was among the highest in the world, with women heading 31 per cent of the national

ministries and 17 per cent of the departments and sub-departments, and holding 38.5 per cent of the seats in the lower house of parliament and 35.2 per cent of the Senate seats. That had led to measures to protect and promote the rights of women and had resulted in the passage of various gender-related laws.

22. **Ms. Štiglic** (Slovenia) said that her Government supported all actors in the promotion of gender equality and women's rights, including UN-Women, which had adopted its Strategic Plan for 2011-2013, and the Human Rights Council Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice. Having been in the forefront of the "Arab spring" demonstrations, the women of the countries in question needed to play an equal role in the decision-making processes of their countries. Women's voices needed to be heard on all global issues, including the fight against gender-based and other forms of discrimination and violence against women.

23. Slovenia attached great importance to the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women in its foreign policy activities and its development cooperation, while paying special attention to the participation of women in peace-related activities and the protection of women and girls during and after conflict. In November 2010, Slovenia had adopted a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), and supported Security Council resolution 1960 (2010) and previous resolutions regarding sexual violence in conflict and the work of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law.

24. **Ms. Sodov** (Mongolia), underscoring her country's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other United Nations initiatives, said that the promotion of gender equality and empowerment was central to the development agenda of Mongolia. Progress had been made in ensuring employment equality and reducing maternal mortality, but progress in promoting women's participation at decision-making levels had been slow. The 2011 Law on Promotion of Gender Equality required that up to 40 per cent of civil-service positions should be occupied by women and prohibited discrimination in relation to hiring, promotions, wages, and access to education and scholarships. At its fall 2011 session, parliament was scheduled to discuss a

draft election law, which included establishment of party quotas for women candidates.

25. Mongolia was pleased that the Commission on the Status of Women would give priority to the theme of empowerment of rural women and their role at its fifty-sixth session in 2012, and supported the recommendation that the perspective of rural and indigenous women should be integrated into the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Brazil.

26. **Ms. Tawk** (Lebanon), noting the positive impact of gender equality on development, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation, said that a comprehensive strategy was required to empower women and girls. Arab women had participated actively in recent movements calling for democratic reform in their countries and demanded a more prominent role in transforming their societies.

27. In recent years, the Lebanese Parliament had amended labour, social security and banking laws to promote gender equality in those areas. Her Government had also adopted procedural measures that benefited women, such as provision of reproductive health care under the national health-care system. A 10-year Government strategy that addressed the primary problems facing women had been launched. Furthermore, a coordinated network of Lebanese non-governmental organizations working to combat mistreatment of children, sexual violence and trafficking in women were conducting nationwide awareness-raising campaigns and lobbying the Government to amend legislation in those areas.

28. Lebanon had also established a commission for Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue to address a host of issues faced by Palestinian refugees, particularly in the areas of education and labour. In closing, her delegation stressed the importance of guaranteeing the inalienable rights of women living under foreign occupation and of prosecuting all violators of those rights.

29. **Mr. Ulibarri** (Costa Rica) said that his country had been disseminating the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and had adopted a 10-year national gender equality and equity policy for 2007-2017. In connection with strengthening the concept of care as a social responsibility, it had established a national childcare and development network. Almost 40 per

cent of the parliamentarians were women, and the country had elected its first woman president in 2010. A parity requirement had been incorporated into recent election legislation. Costa Rica supported the role of UN-Women and its Strategic Plan for 2011-2013 as well as the recommendation in the report of the Secretary-General (A/66/211) that all intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations should fully mainstream a gender perspective into all issues under their consideration.

30. His country was greatly concerned about the unacceptable widespread violence against women and stressed the need to combat violence against women migrant workers and trafficking in women and girls. Overall equality and the empowerment of women were necessary for development and for the fight against social exclusion. Greater attention should be given to the feminization of poverty, and the situation of rural and indigenous women, women of African descent, and women with disabilities were cause for concern. Work must continue to promote the economic empowerment of women and ensure their access to labour markets and decent work.

31. **Mr. Al Otaibi** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government had taken measures to promote the advancement of Saudi women in its development plans, including guaranteeing education at all levels and ensuring women access to the highest ranks in Government and to participation in the labour force. Efforts were also being made to establish units staffed by women in all Government agencies that dealt with women's affairs and to promote their participation in representative politics at the municipal and national levels.

32. Saudi women were currently active in various areas of public life within and outside the Kingdom, including in the diplomatic, political, economic and medical spheres. Eleven members of the Consultative Council were women, and there had been a steady increase in the number of Saudi businesswomen in commercial registers. Several prominent Saudi non-governmental organizations active in such areas as combating domestic violence, coordinating volunteer humanitarian work and promoting the rights of women and children were run by women.

33. Leadership positions held by women domestically included that of deputy minister of education and the post of university director. At the international level,

Saudi women had represented the country in the United Nations Population Fund and on the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had been selected as a member of UN-Women.

34. **Mr. Gumende** (Mozambique) reaffirmed his country's commitment to implement the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and to address the main problems affecting women — poverty, violence and discrimination. Strategies for gender equality and the advancement of women needed to give priority to education of girls and to the economic empowerment and representation of women in the decision-making process.

35. The principle of gender equality was embodied in his country's constitution. Mozambique had recorded an increase in the registration and retention of girls at all levels of education. Government strategies and policies encouraged participation of women in decision-making bodies. Thirty per cent of the members of parliament were women, and eight members of the Council of Ministers or Cabinet were women.

36. Mozambique welcomed the decision by the Commission on the Status of Women to focus on the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication as its 2012 priority theme. It appreciated the various types of support provided in that area by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Government of Norway.

37. **Ms. Karim** (Malawi) said that her country was a party to various regional and global commitments, had incorporated gender into all its development efforts, and had a national gender policy and national gender programme. In the 2009 presidential and parliamentary elections, the percentage of women parliamentarians had been increased from 14 per cent to 22 per cent. Gender training materials were being developed, and an effort was being made to elevate women into decision-making positions and to address pertinent issues.

38. A review had been made of gender-related laws covering decedent estates, marriage, divorce, family relations, gender mainstreaming guidelines and human resources management. The Malawi agricultural input

subsidy programme had transformed the lives of many rural women.

39. Measures taken to increase awareness of violence as a crime and violation of human rights included establishment of victim support units in police stations, a 2007 National Response to Combat Gender-Based Violence, and enactment of the 2006 Prevention of Domestic Violence Act. Child protection officers had been deployed to ensure protection of children's rights. Gender-sensitive policies had been implemented in various public, private and non-governmental organizations sectors with regard to land ownership, transport and reproductive health.

40. **Ms. Tai Li-Lian** (Singapore) said that meritocracy was a guiding principle of Singapore society, as the country's physical limitations made it important to maximize the potential of every individual. Legislative amendments had been introduced to protect young women and girls from commercial sex exploitation and to enhance management of child protection cases. Following significant developments in the practice of Sharia law in her country, Singapore had narrowed the scope of its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and had introduced measures to enhance the protection of women migrant workers and sustain the fight against trafficking in persons.

41. The overall approach taken by Singapore to the advancement of the status of women included equal access to education, training, science and technology. Education was compulsory through the first six years of primary education. The Singapore literacy rate for women was 93.8 per cent. Female students made up more than half of all full-time university students. In 2010, 30 per cent of female residents in the labour force had engaged in job-related structured training or education activities, compared to 28 per cent of male residents.

42. Many women were choosing to work outside the home. In 2010, they represented 56.5 per cent of the labour force, as opposed to below 30 per cent in the 1970s. Singaporean women enjoyed the same educational, economic and political opportunities and health-care standards as men. In fact, over the last 10 years the percentage of economically active women undergoing training had been higher than that of men.

43. **Ms. Al-Seraidi** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country's Constitution guaranteed women's equality with men in terms of all rights and responsibilities, chief among them the right to work, social security, property, asset management, education, health and salary equality. A party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since 2004, the United Arab Emirates had enacted legislation to guarantee women maternity leave and childcare, in addition to establishing national mechanisms to oversee women's and children's affairs.

44. The United Arab Emirates had achieved the Millennium Development Goals in terms of gender equality and women's autonomy in all areas. According to the United Nations Development Programme's gender-related development index for 2007/2008, it ranked 43rd among 177 countries and 29th in the world under the gender empowerment measure (GEM), which was the best rating in the Arab world.

45. Women in the United Arab Emirates accounted for over 20 per cent of representatives on the Federal National Council and 46 per cent of voters. They were also represented in the diplomatic service, technical and professional fields, Government posts and international organizations. Furthermore, the Government had encouraged women to venture into the security and military sectors.

46. A member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking and a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, her country had adopted a law against human trafficking in 2006, the first of its kind in the region. The United Arab Emirates was also a major contributor to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking and had enacted laws that punished rape, prostitution and incitement to debauchery. With regard to domestic employment, in 2007 her Government had set as the mandatory standard a unified contract for domestic work that regulated the rights and duties of domestic workers.

47. Her Government attached great importance to developing and improving the living standards of remote regions, with a particular focus on women's access to services of a quality comparable to that of services provided in cities, hence the establishment of centres for social development in those regions. The law also granted women equal rights to agricultural loans and credits offered by the State to support farmers. In

the context of its continued support for women's advancement worldwide, the United Arab Emirates had pledged to contribute \$5 million to UN-Women.

48. **Ms. Sánchez de Cruz** (Dominican Republic) said that the advancement and empowerment of women in the Dominican Republic were promoted by the Ministry of Women. The Ministry had organized a campaign aimed at gradual reduction of domestic violence and violence against women. The Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure were being reformed to include the concepts of femicide and battered-woman syndrome and the principle of non-reconciliation in cases of violence. New comprehensive care units for victims of violence were being opened, the network of shelters and refuges was being strengthened, and professional staff and logistics were being increased.

49. The "Banana Project", operating in three provinces, was designed to strengthen capacities and entrepreneurship of women in the production sector and facilitate access to agricultural credit and technology. The Dominican Republic had launched a national plan for the prevention of pregnancy in adolescents to tackle the problem of teen pregnancy, which prevented young women from freeing themselves from the cycle of poverty. A committee for the protection of migrant women had been formed as a group of all government agencies that dealt with trafficking and smuggling.

50. In terms of their representation in government, women accounted for 9 per cent of senators, 20 per cent of deputies, 40 per cent of representatives to the Central American Parliament, 7 per cent of mayors, 4 per cent of municipal district directors, 91 per cent of deputy majors, and 33 per cent of council members. UN-Women was the fundamental tool for achieving gender equality and empowerment of women throughout the world. Her country fully supported the decision on the need for a strategic presence in less-developed and middle-income countries and countries undergoing conflict situations.

51. **Ms. Romulus** (Haiti) said that Haitian women were active participants in the economic sector as homemakers, farmers, businesswomen, and educators. Current economic policies were emphasizing resumption of production, with agriculture and cattle-raising offering a niche for recapitalization of small and medium-sized enterprises. Steps being taken to remedy the high rate of illiteracy among rural women

(65 per cent, compared to 48 per cent for the rural population as a whole) included making education for non-violence general in secondary schools; encouraging women to participate as both candidates and voters in elections; ensuring appropriate legal procedures for victims of sexual violence; and training the National Police in promoting respect for women's rights.

52. Haitian women were becoming aware of their role and were organizing, with a view to integrating the feminist struggle to the general context of the return to democracy. Numerous activities were under way to raise the awareness of women as participants in decision-making.

53. **Mr. Charles** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the commitments undertaken by his Government under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other relevant international instruments to eliminate discrimination against women were being fulfilled by means of national legislation. Specifically, laws had been enacted to prevent and punish violence against women and protect women's rights related to matrimony, maternity, cohabitational relationships and occupational health and safety. In addition, a national policy on gender and development was being created by the recently established Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development.

54. Tremendous progress had been made in the areas of education, health and support for working mothers. The number of females graduating from the secondary and tertiary educational levels consistently surpassed the number of males. Women could also access unemployment relief, vocational assistance and youth apprenticeship programmes, while most health services were available free of charge. Proposals were under consideration to provide working women with flexible working hours and access to day care and breastfeeding spaces, as well as to extend the time granted for maternity leave.

55. The Government had made evident its belief that lasting peace could be achieved only through women's equal participation in decision-making processes by piloting the first ever resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, General Assembly resolution 65/69. The Prime Minister of the country was the first woman Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth Caribbean Governments and had advanced the concept of "women as agents of

change" as the Commonwealth Theme for 2011. As a result, a regional colloquium had been held on the issue, bringing together women politicians from throughout the Western Hemisphere and culminating in the adoption of the Port-of-Spain Consensus on Transformational Leadership for Gender Equality.

56. The Prime Minister had recently announced plans to introduce a gender-responsive budget and establish a national commission on gender equality which would include the voices of all sectors of society. Efforts to transform the governance system and increase women's participation in political processes were underpinned by gender-awareness training for political parties and other recruiting mechanisms. Involving boys and men in activities aimed at achieving gender equality was also a major priority. In that regard, national mass media played an important role by promoting mutual understanding and respect between both sexes. Her Government would continue to work at the national and international level to create a society in which women were treated as equal partners in development and urged all Member States to do the same.

57. **Ms. Boiko** (Ukraine) said that her Government viewed its membership on the Executive Board of UN-Women as a great responsibility and, in that capacity, would seek to implement, together with other Board members, policies aimed at reducing violence against women and girls and promoting their leadership. Ukraine had made great progress towards implementing the major United Nations instruments on gender equality. Following the incorporation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into domestic law in 2005, mechanisms had been established to integrate a gender perspective into policies governing education, the collection of statistics, civil society activities and State human resources practices.

58. Gender equality was an integral component of the social and economic reforms under way, including a planned social programme to ensure equal opportunities for women. In that regard, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Commission and other partners had offered essential support. The rights and needs of rural and migrant women still needed to be addressed in the Ukrainian legal framework and local development policies.

59. Her Government encouraged all initiatives aimed at eliminating the trafficking of women and girls, and,

in that respect, welcomed the establishment by the Human Rights Council of the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice. Ukraine had also ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in 2010. The Government considered gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women not only the means to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, but also an essential part of the development agenda, as evidenced by its plans to host a conference for the Council of Europe on the development activities of European countries' national gender mechanisms.

60. **Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the international community's common purpose of empowering women was best served when the work of the Committee focused on the spectrum of challenges that affected both developing and developed countries. His Government had hosted the Third Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in Development of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Participants had highlighted the importance of women's role within the family and their involvement in inter-religious dialogue and had adopted a mechanism to implement the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, recognizing that cooperation among leading minds from all countries was required to achieve progress on the issue.

61. His delegation took note of the Secretary-General's report concerning the integration of a gender perspective into intergovernmental processes of the United Nations (A/66/211) and drew attention, as noted in the report, to the limited progress made within the United Nations system. The upcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women would bring a welcome focus on the problems encountered by rural women. With regard to the problem of violence against women, women living under foreign occupation remained a neglected population that required particular attention.

62. His Government had instituted gender-responsive budgeting, taken measures to mainstream a gender perspective into national policy and developed mechanisms to strengthen accountability, conduct monitoring and evaluation, ensure sufficient resources and promote the participation of civil society in the empowerment of women. Furthermore, the Presidential Centre for Women and Family was creating a development programme on women and the family

focused on job creation, strengthening social protections and reforming laws and regulations.

63. Women's involvement in the fields of education, science and technology in the country had grown considerably. It was important to note that the Government's development policy focused on strengthening the family, which was essential to the empowerment of women. With regard to UN-Women, he stressed that the agency could be efficient and attain a global reach only if it recognized and respected the religious and cultural diversity of different societies and employed a consensus-based approach. Furthermore, the agency must develop parameters for equitable geographic distribution in terms of its programmes and personnel.

64. **Mr. Mnisi** (Swaziland) said that his country's culture regarded women as a pillar of strength in society. The Government was committed to promoting their human rights without undermining their role in the family. The Constitution provided that women had the right to equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities. Laws had been reformed to allow women to register property in their name, and a national gender policy and action plan was being developed. In addition, in line with the declaration by the African Union of 2010-2020 as the African Women's Decade, the Government had developed a Women's Decade Road Map, following consultations with women in all regions of the country. The Road Map identified ten key priority areas for action, which included economic empowerment, peace and security, and energizing the young women's movement.

65. Despite the progress achieved, unemployment, poverty, hunger and HIV/AIDS remained serious problems in Swaziland and had their most acute effects on women. His Government therefore appreciated the technical and capacity-building assistance provided by development partners and hoped that such cooperation would be further strengthened. Noting that the Secretary-General's report on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/66/181) had stressed that rural women's involvement in planning and decision-making was essential to improving their economic situation, he was pleased to report that in Swaziland, a number of Government programmes to facilitate savings and credit cooperatives for rural women were already in place.

66. **Mr. Ntwaagae** (Botswana) said that, despite laudable efforts taken in many countries to advance gender equality, his Government was concerned that opportunities for women in leadership and political participation remained limited. UN-Women would therefore act as an important force to advance the empowerment of women around the world. The Government of Botswana had used the major international and regional instruments on eliminating discrimination against women as the basis for reforming its legislation and procedures, which had led to an increase in women's leadership in all sectors of society.

67. A department had been established charged with integrating women into socio-economic development activities and promoting gender equality. However, a lack of appropriate skills and experience, the absence of disaggregated data and limited financial resources posed significant challenges to mainstreaming a gender perspective in State development strategies, including gender-responsive budgeting.

68. The Government remained committed to improving the situation of rural women, including by expanding their access to social services, employment and entrepreneurship. State programmes sought to strengthen implementation of international commitments regarding rural development and women's rights by providing skills training, improving access to credit and fostering community participation in income-generating activities.

69. The prevalence of violence against women was an issue of great concern. In that regard, his Government had significantly strengthened law-enforcement capacity and supported the Secretary-General's campaign, UNiTE to End Violence against Women. The Domestic Violence Act of 2008 provided victims with maximum protection against abuse and a national action plan to end gender-based violence had been launched in 2007. Cooperation between the Women's Affairs Department and the police had improved the collection of disaggregated data on violence against women.

70. Multi-sectoral collaboration between legal, medical, social and psychological service providers to survivors of violence was also being enhanced. Law-enforcement personnel were still in need of capacity-building programmes, and the monitoring and evaluation systems needed to be strengthened in order

to obtain accurate data. In that regard, the support of United Nations agencies and development partners was deeply appreciated.

71. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that, since its independence, her country had worked to put in place a social legislative framework that enshrined the rights and freedoms of women and established their equality with men in the family and in society. In particular, the personal status code adopted in 1956, which elevated women's rights to a status equal to those of men, was considered one of the most modern laws of its kind, as it addressed such issues as the freedom to marry, the interdiction of polygamy and the establishment of full equality between spouses where divorce rights were concerned.

72. Tunisian women had contributed to the success of the 14 January revolution and continued to participate in the democratic transition and in drafting a new constitution that would ensure their attainment of full equality. The interim Government had taken a number of measures to consolidate the gains achieved for the benefit of women, among them the withdrawal of all reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the adoption of legislation requiring that candidate lists alternate between women and men candidates.

73. Ahead of the elections scheduled for 23 October 2011, a group of university professors, experts and Government representatives had come together to organize awareness-raising campaigns aimed at inculcating a culture of citizenship and democracy among Tunisian women. Concerted efforts from all sectors of society were needed to ensure a successful transition to a democratic Tunisia, one whose strong, eminently capable women would have a crucial role in building.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

74. **Mr. Kodama** (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, referred to the statement made by the representative of the Republic of Korea and said that his Government recognized that the so-called "wartime comfort women" had suffered immeasurable physical and psychological pain and it had extended its sincere apology to them for the affront to their honour. The issue of reparations, property and claims following the Second World War had been legally settled with the States parties to the Treaty of Peace with Japan as well

as through bilateral treaties and instruments. In 1995, the Government and people of Japan had established the Asian Women's Fund to facilitate support for former "comfort women", which included financial remedies and welfare assistance. Since the end of the War, his Government had consistently faced its past, and for over 60 years, had dedicated itself to promoting peace, democracy and respect for human rights.

75. **Mr. Kim** Soo Gwon (Republic of Korea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the issue of "comfort women", which could constitute a war crime, had not been settled in all bilateral treaties, namely in the Agreement Between Japan and the Republic of Korea concerning the Settlement of Problems in Regard to Property and Claims and Economic Cooperation. The Government of Japan therefore remained legally accountable for the issue. He drew attention to the 1998 report of the Special Rapporteur on systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict, which affirmed that the treaties referred to by the representative of Japan had not specifically addressed military sexual slavery. His Government had proposed the initiation of bilateral negotiations with the Government of Japan to resolve the issue of "comfort women" and remained open to consultations on the matter.

76. **Mr. Kodama** (Japan) said that he had made his Government's position on the issue clear and would not repeat it.

77. **Mr. Kim** Soo Gwon (Republic of Korea) noted that the recommendations of human rights treaty bodies, including those of the Committee against Torture in 2007 and of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2009, had affirmed that the issue of "comfort women" remained unresolved.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.