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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 11th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 11 October 2011, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Haniff ..... (Malaysia)

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

**Agenda item 27: Social development** (*continued*)

- (a) **Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly** (*continued*) (A/C.3/66/L.11)
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- (c) **Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing** (*continued*) (A/C.3/66/L.13)

*Draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.11: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly*

1. **Mr. Cesa** (Argentina), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.11 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it attempted to reflect in a balanced manner the measures necessary for the achievement of all social development objectives, and also took into account poverty eradication, which was the theme for the fiftieth session of the Commission for Social Development. The Group of 77 and China looked forward to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus after a constructive negotiation process with all partners.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.7: Policies and programmes involving youth*

2. **Ms. Popovici** (Republic of Moldova), speaking also on behalf of Portugal and Senegal, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.7, a traditional resolution first launched after the adoption of the 1995 World Programme of Action on Youth that had been adopted by consensus on a biennial basis since then. The current draft contained a new text that focused on the impact of the economic and financial crisis on the development of young people and addressed, inter alia, youth education, participation in decision-making, employment, health and youth with disabilities. Expressing appreciation for the contributions of all delegations to improving the text, and in particular that of youth delegates, she hoped that the upcoming informal meetings on the draft resolution would be

constructive and that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

3. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Azerbaijan, Croatia and Guatemala had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.7.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.9: Cooperatives in social development*

4. **Ms. Sodov** (Mongolia) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.9 on behalf of the sponsors, noting that Morocco had also become a sponsor. Cooperatives were becoming one of the major factors of economic and social development, thus contributing to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The draft resolution contained four new paragraphs. The first welcomed the proclamation of the year 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives; the second invited Governments to consider developing a road map or plan of action for the promotion of cooperatives for sustainable socio-economic development. The third new paragraph drew the attention of Governments to the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General to focus support on cooperatives as sustainable and successful business enterprises; and the fourth encouraged Governments to expand the availability and accessibility of research on the operations and contribution of cooperatives in order to assess their impact on socio-economic development and raise awareness of their contribution to society. She expressed the hope that the resolution would receive Member States' unanimous support and wide sponsorship.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.10: High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and Other Internationally Agreed Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities*

5. **Ms. Hernando** (Philippines), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.10 also on behalf of the United Republic of Tanzania, said that it was important for persons with disabilities to be regarded as active participants in and beneficiaries of development. The report on realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities (A/64/180), indicated that the international community must ensure that disability issues were included in the MDGs and in any development framework beyond 2015. The High-level

Meeting of the General Assembly would provide a valuable opportunity to consider a global strategy through 2015 and beyond for mainstreaming disability in the development agenda. The sponsors were working constructively with other delegations to gather broad support for the draft resolution and looked forward to the contributions of all Member States to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly within the context of development.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.13: Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing*

6. **Mr. Cesa** (Argentina), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.13 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the challenges faced by older persons, such as poverty, discrimination, abuse and lack of special mechanisms and services, continued to require the immediate attention of the international community. Building on the previous year's text, the draft resolution encouraged treaty body monitoring mechanisms and special procedure mandate holders to pay more attention to the situation of older persons so as to strengthen the promotion and protection of their human rights. In order to raise awareness of the contemporary tragedy of elder abuse, the draft resolution would designate 15 June as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Lastly, it recognized the contribution of the open-ended working group on ageing as a much-needed platform to discuss the situation of older persons and envisaged the necessary measures for its continuation. As in previous years, the Group of 77 and China counted on the constructive engagement of all delegations in informal consultations on the draft resolution with a view to its adoption by consensus.

**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)

7. **Mr. Al-Awadhi** (Yemen) said that his Government, one of the first to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1984, spared no effort to promote and protect the rights of Yemeni women. Yemen had also

ratified a number of international conventions on women's rights, which were enshrined in the country's constitution and in national legislation. Moreover, institutional mechanisms, such as a supreme council on women and a national commission on women, had been established to implement the legislative framework, operating alongside the Ministry of Human Rights, which attached great importance to women's rights.

8. Women's issues had been given priority in several national development plans and strategies relating to the advancement of women, economic growth and primary education, attesting to the ongoing efforts to promote and protect the rights of women. In closing, he drew attention to the violation of the fundamental rights of Arab women living under Israeli occupation, which the international community had a responsibility to bring to an end.

9. **Mr. Atabekov** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the recent awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to three women leaders underscored the critical role that women played in promoting development, security and human rights, as articulated in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). He called on Member States to foster the peaceful resolution of disputes by increasing the participation of women in decision-making processes. Women held many leadership roles in Kyrgyzstan, including as legislators and within the Cabinet. The country had a woman President, and women were at the head of the National Academy of Sciences, the Supreme Court and the Attorney General's Office.

10. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/66/181) and supported its assertion that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals depended on providing them with the means to exercise their economic rights. His Government therefore supported the planned focus on rural women's empowerment during the upcoming fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

11. Twenty years of economic liberalization and market reforms following the achievement of independence had led to an increase in income disparity and poverty in his country and had compelled many people, most of them women, to seek work abroad, where they often faced situations of violence, discrimination and exploitation. His Government

welcomed the Secretary-General's report on violence against women migrant workers (A/66/212) and affirmed its will to conclude bilateral and multilateral agreements to ensure that the rights of that group were respected. He called on all Member States that had not yet done so to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Lastly, his Government offered its full support to UN-Women and invited its Executive Director to visit Kyrgyzstan.

12. **Ms. Alsaleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her Government had continued to work to improve the situation of Syrian women, bolstered by its strong political will to undertake comprehensive reform and build a more just society for all its citizens. Since gaining the right to vote in the early twentieth century, Syrian women had come to enjoy full equality with men, guaranteed by the Constitution, and occupy high positions in Government and all areas of public life.

13. A national strategy on reproductive health had been put in place, as had a programme aimed at improving the proficiency of woman engineers and agricultural labourers. Measures to empower rural women had been taken in the context of the project on economic empowerment and poverty reduction for women, carried out in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme.

14. The Syrian Arab Republic was actively working to confront the challenge of liberating the Syrian Golan and to build a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with resolutions based on international legitimacy in order to end the suffering of Syrian civilians living under Israeli occupation, in particular that of Syrian women. In that regard, her delegation reiterated its demand that the Secretary-General include in his reports the painful reality and forms of violence endured by Syrian women in the occupied Golan for over four decades, which he had failed to do despite her Government's repeated requests.

15. The Syrian Arab Republic was attempting to improve the situation of women in the occupied Golan by providing its students with education grants to attend Syrian universities, having also enacted a law that hired and paid salaries for work in the mother country to teachers dismissed from their posts by the occupation authorities. Lastly, UN-Women must be given full authority to deal, through a participatory approach, with the challenges faced by women under

foreign occupation, lest a failure to do so impair the legitimacy of the United Nations effort to empower women.

16. **Mr. Meneang Nay** (Cambodia) said that the achievement of gender equality was largely dependent on development efforts, including the eradication of poverty. Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, which provided the major policy framework for realizing gender equality, many States had recognized the importance of women's participation in economic and political systems. The Government of Cambodia recognized women's skills and potential and had sought to increase their representation in the judiciary, government bodies at all levels and the private sector. Legislation to prevent and punish domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual exploitation was also in place. In coordination with UN-Women, a five-year plan on women's empowerment was under way, addressing the areas of education, health, economic empowerment and leadership.

17. Discrimination and violence against women were issues that went beyond individuals and had an effect on families, communities and entire societies. His Government's national development plan had integrated the reduction of violence against women as an indicator of development and had adapted the Millennium Development Goals related to gender equality to the national context. In addition, programmes had been developed to help rural women access health care, educate their children and live free from violence.

18. Beyond Government actions, the advancement of women required the mutual support and partnerships between international organizations, development partners, civil society and the private sector. The least developed countries in particular depended on global partnerships aimed at fulfilling commitments to provide official development assistance, market access, technical and financial support, and capacity-building in order to enable women's participation in socio-economic development.

19. **Mr. Osman** (Sudan) said that the strides made in empowering Sudanese women, promoting their participation and improving their situation had been no coincidence but rather the result of targeted Government policies. Under Sudanese law, women had been guaranteed equal pay for equal work since the

1970s. Recently adopted legislation ensured their equality with men where retirement age was concerned and stipulated that 25 per cent of seats in Parliament should be held by women. For a number of decades, women in Sudan had had the right to vote and stand for public office, and a woman had been nominated candidate for president in the most recent elections.

20. The rising percentages of women's participation in all areas of public life attested to his country's pioneering role in promoting women's advancement: 28 per cent of seats in Parliament were currently held by women, as were 66 per cent of civil service posts and 45 per cent of private sector posts. Women were also prominently represented at the highest levels in the judiciary, the diplomatic service, the armed forces and the security services.

21. Rooted in its belief in women's vital role in society, his Government had adopted a national policy on women's advancement that focused on health, the environment, education, economic development, active participation in decision-making, conflict resolution, peace consolidation and preserving rights. Moreover, a number of administrative units had been established to mainstream the gender perspective in all areas of Government and federal ministries and formulate plans and strategies for the advancement of women. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Security had undertaken a project for the development of rural women in all Sudanese states, with a particular focus on the Darfur region. Measures included financing of small entrepreneurial projects, training programmes and awareness-raising campaigns on health, nutrition and women's rights.

22. A national plan to combat gender-based violence had been adopted in 2005, and a unit to combat violence against women and girls had been established under the Ministry of Justice. Furthermore, a national strategy to eradicate genital mutilation of girls had been put in place in 2008, and the Special Prosecutor had issued an official decree calling for increased support for and protection of victims of gender-based violence resulting from the outbreak of the rebellion in Darfur.

23. Recent amendments to a 1991 criminal law had inserted a provision on crimes against humanity and war crimes, and the law's provision on rape and fornication had been revised. A number of official publications addressed the need to combat impunity of

Government officials who had committed crimes against humanity and against women in particular. Government bodies were also working in cooperation with UNFPA and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) to raise public awareness of the issue of violence against women in the Darfur region and nationwide, and to provide care to victims.

24. In coordination with UNMIS and the Sudanese Ministry of Health, a protocol signed with the World Health Organization (WHO) had been revised to assist rape victims and facilitate the payout of compensation due them. In that context, his delegation wished to register its unequivocal condemnation of the rape of women and girls by the rebellion in Darfur. It was also necessary to address the situation of women living under occupation in Palestine, the Golan Heights and occupied Arab territories in Lebanon, and the outrageous violations of women's rights and dignity resulting from such occupation.

25. Given the potential for the global economic crises and environmental degradation to impede women in achieving full equality and enjoyment of their rights, his delegation reiterated its rejection of unilaterally imposed economic sanctions and embargoes as policies that violated the rights of women, having a negative impact analogous to the harm done to the developing world by the debt burden. It therefore called for debt cancellation for developing countries, especially the least developed countries and post-conflict countries, along with the lifting of trade restrictions. Lastly, his Government was prepared to share its best practices in the area of domestic legislation enacted to promote the advancement of women.

26. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) said that Israel's military occupation and oppressive practices against the Occupied Palestinian Territory had had severe consequences for Palestinian women, affecting not only their daily lives, but also hampering the implementation of programmes geared towards their advancement. The continued illegal seizure of land by Israel over the past year — which had involved the demolition of homes, an extension of the apartheid Wall and the detention and imprisonment of Palestinian people — had worsened the economic and social conditions in the territory. The escalating violence against Palestinian women emanating from the occupation and the continuation of armed conflict was also an issue of great concern.

27. Strengthening the role of women and eradicating all forms of discrimination against them was therefore a main pillar of the Palestinian national project. The Palestinian Cabinet had recently endorsed a nine-year plan to combat violence against women, which responded directly to the objectives of Millennium Development Goal 3. The plan, which had been developed by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in cooperation with UN-Women, approached violence against women as a development issue with broad implications for the Territory's political, social and economic systems.

28. Palestine's submission of an application for admission to membership in the United Nations on 23 September had given the Palestinian people hope for the realization of their right to self-determination and their aspirations for peace in their own sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital. That historical moment was also viewed as progress towards achieving the equality and empowerment of Palestinian women. It was time for the States Members of the United Nations to shoulder their responsibility in standing firm in their support of the Palestinian people and helping them to achieve their long overdue independence.

29. **Ms. Velichko** (Belarus) said that gender equality was an essential precondition for social development and one of the fundamental tasks in the realization of human rights and the attainment of social justice. Her country welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts on behalf of women, including the promotion of gender equality issues on the United Nations agenda and initiatives on ending violence against women.

30. Promoting gender issues in the international arena was in keeping with the universally recognized strategy of expanding opportunities for women and ensuring gender equality through the reform of institutions that perpetuated inequality. However, despite repeated calls by the General Assembly to include a gender perspective in all discussions, the subject continued to be inadequately reflected in resolutions addressing other matters, among them social and economic issues. The recently established United Nations body for gender issues, UN-Women, was a welcome addition to the United Nations system and would provide Governments with essential cooperation to promote the advancement of women at the local level. One of its top priorities should be to combat human trafficking, which was one of the most

serious impediments to the expansion of women's rights and opportunities.

31. Gender policies in her country were realized by providing women with the same access to education and professional training as men and by guaranteeing them the right to work and to receive commensurate remuneration. An important factor in the attainment of gender equality was the level of women's participation in the Government, with women accounting for 32 per cent of the National Assembly. In addition women were full-fledged participants in civic society, comprising 56.7 per cent of the members of social organizations. Among working women, 54.6 per cent had a higher or specialized education, providing them with a competitive advantage that allowed them to earn wages on a par with men.

32. Equal value was attached to the reproductive health of both women and men, to family planning and to support for mothers and children. Among members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and in comparison with other Eastern European countries, her country registered the lowest maternal mortality rates. As a conscientious party to all international instruments on gender issues, Belarus was implementing the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the basis of the consideration of its seventh periodic report in January 2011. In addition, progress had been made in incorporating gender studies into the educational system, while a project planned for 2011-2013 in conjunction with the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) would provide technical assistance for the prevention of gender-based violence. Regrettably, some recommendations could not be accepted since they did not reflect the content of the interactive dialogue during the presentation of the report and in view of their openly politicized character, which contravened the spirit of the Convention.

33. In shaping attitudes on gender equality, the mass media and the educational system were vital. An important role was also played by gender research, and the potential of UN-Women in that regard should be explored. Finally, a greater allocation of resources was required from international and non-governmental organizations in order to redirect efforts to ensure the equality and empowerment of women.

34. **Mr. Shin Dong Ik** (Republic of Korea) said that despite the many international instruments that had

brought women's rights to the top of the international agenda, gender equality remained a rhetorical notion for far too many women. The situation of women faced with multiple forms of discrimination, such as rural women, women migrant workers and women with disabilities was of particular concern. In that regard, his delegation commended the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, who had promoted a more proactive and holistic approach to protecting vulnerable groups.

35. In view of the dramatic increase of migrant workers and international marriages in the Republic of Korea, his Government was striving to ensure integration of people with different cultural backgrounds into the community, with a particular focus on women migrants. Multicultural family support centres had been established to provide immigrants with vocational training. Other innovative policies included specialized emergency assistance services and counselling for women migrants.

36. Sexual violence against women during armed conflict was one of the most egregious violations of human rights and one which had been passed over in silence throughout history. His Government was deeply concerned about the increase in systematic rape of women during armed conflict. In that regard, he recalled the so-called "comfort women", who had been forced into military sexual slavery during the Second World War. Such acts constituted war crimes, and under certain circumstances, crimes against humanity.

37. His delegation urged Member States to make the utmost effort to end such crimes by protecting women and girls during armed conflict, providing effective remedies for victims and ending the impunity of offenders. It was also critical to raise public awareness of such matters, including by promoting human rights education on the issue of sexual slavery during wartime. Ensuring the accuracy of historical accounts in educational curriculums was another key means to preventing the recurrence of such violations.

38. **Mr. Mohamed** (Malaysia) said that women had actively contributed to his country's development since its independence. Significant economic progress in the last decades had been possible due to the greater participation of women in the development process. Their level of education was at an all-time high, while their participation in the labour force had increased and legislation granting them equal opportunities and

respecting their rights had been adopted. Its national policy on women aimed to ensure equitable sharing in the acquisition of resources, information, opportunities and benefits of development for men and women alike.

39. Malaysia took its obligations as a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its pledges to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action seriously. It had made changes in its legal and institutional frameworks to protect and improve the rights of women in all areas, and had also hosted a summit gathering the world's first ladies in October 2010. That event, which his Government was prepared to host again in 2012, had provided a platform for initiatives to empower the younger generation and had highlighted the importance of investing in the holistic education and welfare of women and children.

40. His Government would also continue to adopt a holistic approach to eradicating violence against women, including by removing impunity and prosecuting perpetrators of such violence, and by protecting and rehabilitating victims. In that respect, its act on domestic violence had been reviewed and its penal code amended to further deter acts of domestic and sexual violence. He hoped that cooperation and partnership with NGOs in planning and drawing up policies on women and development in Malaysia would continue.

41. **Ms. Arias** (Peru) said that her Government attached importance to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. States parties must fully comply with their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol.

42. The Government of Peru was committed to continuing to increase social spending for women, so as to further develop strategic programmes with a gender focus, especially in the poorest areas of the country. Its Ministry for Women and Social Development would allocate more human and financial resources towards the implementation of policies for social inclusion in order, inter alia, to eliminate violence against women, the trafficking in women and girls, the feminization of poverty and HIV/AIDS. As part of her Government's policy of zero tolerance for

domestic and sexual violence affecting women and girls in particular, a comprehensive national plan was in place which included modern legislation and services such as emergency centres for women, a dedicated hotline and a shelter for women who faced violence.

43. Peru had also set up social programmes to provide financial support to women in the country's poorest districts, with a view to improving nutrition, health care and education, and providing timely immunization and care during pregnancy. The aim had been to empower women and make them agents of development by placing them directly at the helm of the programme. Measures were being implemented to ensure equal pay for equal work and help reconcile family and work life, for example, by providing day care to children through 3 years of age, enabling mothers to participate fully in work.

44. Lastly, international and South-South cooperation and the sharing of experiences were crucial to make progress towards achieving gender equality, especially in access to education and technology and in promoting strategies for decent work. Peru was undertaking joint efforts in that regard.

45. **Ms. Hernando** (Peru), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her Government had been committed to increasing investment in education and eliminating gender inequality at all levels of formal education, in order to help girls and young women to overcome the vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion. The gender equality gap had been bridged at all education levels in Peru, and female participation was 10 per cent higher than men's at the secondary and university levels. Nevertheless, gender inequalities remained in rural women's access to secondary and higher education.

46. The cause of such inequalities were poverty, but also gender stereotypes, which led to problems of violence against women, a social phenomenon which affected many women in Peru, particularly young women. It was thus important to address the deeply entrenched social perceptions of gender when addressing the problem of violence against women. Lastly, she called on world leaders to continue to address the issues affecting all women, and to focus in particular on the need to increase women's participation in global discussion forums. It was

important to view women as agents of change in order to improve the world situation.

47. **Ms. Djan** (Ghana) said that her Government had various administrative and legal instruments in place to promote and ensure gender equality and women's empowerment, including its Constitution and laws that were in line with international treaties such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Those, together with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly were guiding policy frameworks in Ghana.

48. Rural women, nearly half of whom worked in farming, were the backbone of the agricultural labour force in Ghana, generally working as subsistence farmers, small-scale entrepreneurs, unpaid care workers or casual wage labourers. As agriculture accounted for over 40 per cent of Ghana's gross domestic product (GDP) and more than half its food crop farmers were women, a wide range of measures were being undertaken to help rural women to confront the challenges posed by the global financial and economic crisis, volatile food and fuel prices and the impact of climate change, which had exacerbated poverty and inequality. Credit facilities had been extended, and technological services and management and finance skills for rural women had been improved.

49. As education was the most sustainable means to empower rural women, the Ministry of Education had set up night schools to promote their functional literacy. Grants, free school uniforms and school meal programmes had helped to significantly improve the enrolment and retention rate of rural female students, and health- and employment-related social protection policies were also in place. Public investment in sustainable infrastructures such as those for transportation, water, sanitation and renewable energy were essential, and a holistic approach was needed to ensure that gender equality was integrated into national policies on food and agriculture, in particular.

50. States, civil society and international organizations must work together, inter alia, to identify new trends in rural labour markets, enhance the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data, place rural women at the focus of local and national



job creation initiatives and build their productive capacity. Temporary special measures were needed to ensure the full and equal participation of women in decision-making and strengthen implementation of existing commitments on rural women's rights and rural development. Alternative funding should be examined and best practices shared in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in rural areas.

51. Improving women's participation in governance and decision-making was crucial in the fight against poverty, so that their views were not excluded from policies and legislation, nor society deprived of their contribution to the formulation of national budgets and resource allocation. As a first step in that regard, Ghana was considering introducing quotas for women's participation. Implementation of gender programmes must be hastened to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

52. **Mr. El Farouq** (Morocco) said that the protection of the fundamental rights of women remained at the heart of recent reforms undertaken in his country to create a democratic society that respected human rights. Morocco's new constitution was a significant step in the evolution of the status of Moroccan women: it affirmed the State's commitment to eliminating discrimination based on sex, race, belief, culture, social status, or any other personal circumstances, and set out gender equality as a fundamental principle in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. It also provided for affirmative action for women, including to ensure equal participation in local government.

53. Significant progress had been made towards achieving gender equality in recent years, such as through a review of the country's nationality and family codes, the development of national strategies to combat violence against women, and the incorporation of a gender dimension in public policy and gender-sensitive budgeting, as well as in the national budget. The Government had recently notified the United Nations of its intention to withdraw its reservations to article 9, paragraph 2, and article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and it was in the final stages of adoption of the Convention's Optional Protocol, demonstrating its strengthened commitment to relevant international instruments.

54. A governmental agenda for gender equality had been adopted for the period from 2011-2015 to facilitate the integration of a gender approach in public policies. That agenda was participatory and took account of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the legislative elections to be held in November 2011 would reserve a quota of 60 seats in the lower house for women, and 30 seats for those under 40 years of age.

55. The prevention of violence and discrimination against women migrant workers was essential. In that respect, he welcomed the adoption by the International Labour Organization (ILO) of the Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers and noted that his Government had started to draft legislation to regulate domestic workers and prohibit work by girls under the age of 15. Morocco would continue to step up its efforts in cooperation with relevant United Nations bodies, and endorsed the activities of UN-Women in particular.

56. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that, as a member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, his country had worked constructively on drafting that body's Strategic Plan towards achieving women's empowerment and advancement at all levels. Pakistan's Constitution guaranteed equal rights for all without any discrimination on the basis of caste, sex or race, and guaranteed the full participation of women in all spheres of national life. Successive governments had taken steps to promote the rights of and eliminate discrimination against women in the public and private sectors. A number of women were members of the national and provincial legislatures and occupied high-level positions in the Cabinet, including the posts of the Speaker of the National Assembly and Foreign Minister.

57. Among the initiatives taken for women's empowerment were a strategy to reduce the feminization of poverty and end violence against women, the introduction of legislative structures to empower women, and a national plan of action based on the Beijing Platform for Action and observations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on his country's last periodic report. Pakistan had also set up a national commission on the status of women in 2000 and had adopted laws to protect women's rights, including on sexual harassment at the workplace. Programmes were in place to provide cash grants to female heads-of-

household, and to grant state land to poor women tenant farmers in rural areas, where the functional literacy rate among women had improved. His Government was working together with the growing private sector, the media and the judiciary in promoting women's rights.

58. With only four years left until 2015, it was imperative to expedite efforts relating to the gender dimensions of all the MDGs to ensure their timely implementation and to bridge the gaps in the implementation of the Beijing Platform, which remained the most comprehensive global policy framework for the full realization of women's human rights. Full attention must be given to women forced to suffer the consequences of armed conflict and situations of foreign occupation, as they faced double discrimination. Their situation must be addressed by all the relevant actors of the United Nations system.

59. **Ms. De** (India), welcoming the establishment of UN-Women, said that her country had emphasized putting women on equal footing with men in all areas, not only through appropriate legislative and policy frameworks, but also by raising social awareness on gender equality and women's empowerment, and fighting deep-rooted social prejudices and stereotypes. She drew attention to India's Constitution, which provided for positive discrimination in favour of women and the adoption of measures to eliminate all forms of gender inequality, and to its national policy for the empowerment of women.

60. Political empowerment was a priority and half the local government positions were reserved for women, with more than a million elected women to those bodies. A draft law was under consideration to reserve 33 per cent of the seats in Parliament and state legislatures for women, while the positions of President, speaker of the lower house and other high national positions were already filled by women. The role of women as agents of sustained socio-economic growth and change had been recognized, for example, in the country's five-year plans for economic development. Proposals on gender empowerment had been incorporated in the last few plans, and gender had been made a cross-cutting theme in all development plans. Also, a committee was in place to ensure that laws passed by Parliament were gender-sensitive.

61. A number of education and health initiatives had been carried out to improve women's access in both

areas: the literacy rate among women had been increased, free education was provided for girls from 6 to 14 years of age, and health-care support was being provided to all villages, focusing on maternal and children's health in particular. Legislation targeting domestic violence and trafficking in women and girls had been strengthened, with a multidimensional, victim-centred approach taken to the latter problem. India was fully committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

62. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia) said that his country had made concerted efforts with regional and international partners in promoting gender equality and the advancement of women. His Government had enacted legislation, undertaken legal reforms, and developed numerous policies and programmes in that regard, addressing gender inequalities and redressing issues of economic and social injustice from discriminatory cultural practices and historical imbalances.

63. A national gender plan of action and procedures for its monitoring and evaluation had been drawn up, outlining specific strategies and indicators and defining the roles of stakeholders and the policy objectives and resources needed. His Government had also launched programmes to help, train and mentor women in management and fund small- and medium-sized enterprises to improve their living standards. In view of the increase in gender-based violence, which undermined the dignity of women and affected their ability to contribute to development, the Government had laws on affirmative action and the family in place and had established women and child protection units throughout the country.

64. Namibia had a high female school-enrolment rate, with more females than males completing primary and secondary school. Despite the progress made, however, gender disparities persisted in all sectors. To address that, the country's Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had embarked on a gender-responsive budgeting exercise in the agriculture, water and forestry, education, health and social services sectors to ensure that Government resources were used to meet the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable women and girls.

65. **Mr. Khan** (Indonesia) said that his country remained committed to strengthened policies and strategies to ensure that women were accorded their

fair share of economic benefits. Steps were being taken to facilitate women's access to capital and the market, and a programme was in place to support the construction of economic and social infrastructure in communities to give women entrepreneurs access to training and other economic resources. Targeted education programmes for women were also in place to address stigmatization as to the employability of women, and a law had been issued to guarantee equal opportunity employment and treatment by employers, while gender-sensitive policies sought to safeguard women workers' reproductive rights and promote equal rights and responsibilities for men and women workers.

66. Massive labour migration was an issue that must be urgently addressed. Specifically, efforts should be made to ensure that the benefits of globalization were shared fairly by migrant workers. As a country of origin, Indonesia had taken institutional, administrative and legal steps to protect and empower its migrant workers and had developed arrangements with host countries to ensure that the rights of those workers were protected. Countries of destination, for their part, must continue to fulfil their commitment to implementing the international human rights of women and women migrant workers.

67. Development policies must enable women to participate in democratic governance. Having had a woman President and with more than 18 per cent of the seats in its national legislature currently occupied by women, Indonesia had proved that democracy and women's rights could thrive in a Muslim society. UN-Women played an important role in providing support to national partners on the basis of national priorities and should continue its efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in all social, economic and environmental forums.

68. **Ms. Liphoto** (Lesotho) said that the empowerment and equality of women were among the top priorities of Lesotho, which had made significant strides towards eliminating violence against women, providing them with quality education and increasing their participation in decision-making. Her Government had had significant achievements in that regard, including through the enactment of legislation to promote gender parity and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

69. To help rural women overcome the range of challenges that they faced owing, inter alia, to the rise

in food prices and the effects of climate change, her Government had launched awareness-raising campaigns to help improve their economic and social well-being and, in partnership with civil society organizations, had provided technical and financial assistance to help them carry out the agricultural projects that they had organized or their work as rural health-care providers. As a measure to implement the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, her Government had enacted an anti-trafficking law in 2011 which focused on women and children. In partnership with civil society, it had educated communities on that scourge and established a shelter for victims, which provided counselling and training.

70. As the HIV/AIDS pandemic remained one of her country's main development challenges, with women and girls being the most vulnerable, the Government continued to implement international, national, regional and subregional instruments to combat that phenomenon, including through a national strategic plan for 2011-2016, based on the principles of gender equality and the advancement of women's rights. Lesotho had submitted its combined report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which showed its resolve to fulfil its international human rights obligations. Lastly, as a founding member of the UN-Women's Executive Board, she appealed to Member States to provide that body with the needed financial support.

71. **Mr. Noziri** (Tajikistan) said that ensuring gender equality was an important area in its State policy and public structure activities. Public awareness had been raised on matters such as women's equality, their representation in governance bodies, the school enrolment of girls and domestic violence. His Government had a number of initiatives in place to enhance the role and status of women, including through a specific action plan to that end, a presidential decree and a law for gender equality and equal opportunities in public service and the social and economic sphere. One programme specifically aimed to increase the representation of women leaders in Government agencies; and their representation in the legislative, executive and judicial branches had already reached 30 per cent. A draft law to counter domestic violence was currently under consideration, and the marriage age had been raised from 17 to 18 years of

age. The access and participation of women and girls in all areas of education, training, science and technology was a priority.

72. Despite those efforts, issues like the feminization of poverty and high rates of maternal and infant mortality remained of concern in Tajikistan, as were issues affecting the family, such as the increase in the divorce rate, early marriages, and the problems faced by the families of migrant workers. Resources, awareness-raising and other practical measures were needed to provide a legal basis for the protection of women's rights in the country. In order to overcome the remaining economic, political, cultural and other barriers to gender equality, the support of the international community was needed, first and foremost in the area of education.

73. **Ms. Ramosepele** (South Africa) welcomed the establishment of UN-Women and said that its close collaboration with the Commission on the Status of Women would enhance the mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system. Women's positive role as agents of change in society was especially evident among women emerging from conflict situations, who demonstrated great resolve for reconciliation and national cohesion during peacebuilding processes. Nevertheless, the needs of those women continued to be overlooked in peace agreements, at donor conferences and in post-conflict legal reform, a situation that needed to be rectified. Their involvement in those processes should be encouraged, including as mediators, and good practices for increasing their participation from local to international levels in conflict resolution and peacebuilding must be more widely disseminated and consistently implemented.

74. Women also needed to play an active role in discussions on climate change, as they were the most affected and had to ensure the daily welfare of children and the aged. In that regard, she urged the United Nations system to enhance programmes for the advancement of rural women, women living with disabilities and indigenous women. The South African Government had initiated collaborative efforts with business and social partners to design mechanisms to retain jobs and mitigate the impact of an economic downturn. The effective involvement of and benefits for women in that respect must be ensured.

75. Her Government accorded high priority to poverty eradication, the creation of decent work, fostering investment and promoting a more inclusive economy, and had mainstreamed a gender perspective into its main priorities, which included ensuring access to quality health care and education and crime prevention and response. In spite of the Government's long-standing efforts to build an inclusive and socially cohesive, democratic society, women still faced major challenges of underdevelopment and were subjected to various forms of discrimination, abuse and violence. South Africa would continue to strive for the empowerment of women, including through the drafting of a law on gender equality which would be submitted to Cabinet for approval by early 2012.

76. **Mr. Chipaziwa** (Zimbabwe) said that ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women were a priority among the MDGs that his Government was striving to achieve, as it sought to incorporate a gender perspective in most of its development programmes, in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. In spite of difficult conditions in his country, the Government had continued to deploy much of its own resources, for example towards implementing a number of national legal and international instruments, including through the adoption of a national gender policy which provided an institutional framework for gender mainstreaming.

77. Zimbabwe's combined report would be considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2012. Despite its efforts, however, inequalities remained, including in the persistence of gender stereotypes, violence against women, women's underrepresentation in decision-making processes and the unequal distribution of unpaid work between women and men. A massive scaling up of policies was needed to improve the situation, and women's economic empowerment was also critical.

78. He highlighted the particular vulnerabilities of women living in rural areas, women infected or affected by HIV and women migrant workers, who faced multiple challenges and more discrimination. His Government also remained committed to learning from and sharing best practices on ways to enhance the situation of women with disabilities. It was cooperating with all countries and stakeholders in combating

trafficking in women and girls, actively strengthening its national and subregional responses in that regard.

79. Other initiatives sought to curb violence against women and reduce maternal and child mortality, which remained high. He appealed for the international community's cooperation in combating maternal mortality and morbidity, including in addressing the problem of obstetric fistula. Lastly, he urged UN-Women to strengthen its capacity as regards the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by gender, age and geography and called on the international community to work together to fulfil its commitments towards ensuring the empowerment and advancement of women.

80. **Mr. Almossawy** (Iraq) said that the empowerment of women was an integral part of the Iraqi Government's plan of action, which had been adopted in accordance with relevant international instruments and the principle of equal rights and duties, on which the new Iraqi state was founded. He paid tribute to Iraqi women, who in the face of senseless wars, terrorism and violence had shown their courage, supporting their families, carrying on their work responsibilities, and holding high-level posts in the new democratic regime.

81. Based on the principles set forth in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Iraqi Constitution guaranteed the political rights of all citizens, including the right to vote, stand for election, and work in both the Government and civil society. Moreover, it stipulated that a quarter of Parliamentary seats must be held by women, putting Iraq on a par with developed countries in that regard and paving the way for broader participation in public life. The Government aimed to facilitate access to voting sites to certain groups, including pregnant women and women who lived in remote areas, at the forthcoming elections.

82. Iraqi women held leadership positions in Government and other spheres of professional public life, proving themselves to be able and formidable competitors to men, who had monopolized Government positions prior to the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. Women's participation in non-governmental organizations, where they numbered in the hundreds and performed their tasks with distinction, was also worthy of note.

83. While the situation of woman in Iraq remained far from ideal and a number of obstacles arising from the traditions and customs of a conservative society — some of which, like honour killings, must be combated resolutely and which ran counter to the policy and beliefs of the new Iraq — continued to hinder their advancement, Iraq could take pride in the achievements of women to date, particularly in a region where some countries continued to bar their women from driving, in violation of their fundamental rights. In closing, he expressed appreciation for the assistance of international organizations in bringing about the advancement of women in Iraq and looked forward to continued cooperation with them.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*