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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 27 July 2012, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. de Alba (Vice-President)..... (Mexico)

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In the absence of Mr. Koterec (Slovakia), Mr. de Alba (Mexico), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Coordination, programme and other questions
(*continued*)

(d) Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (*continued*) (E/2012/61; E/2012/L.8)

Economic and environmental questions (*continued*)

(k) Women and development (E/2012/27-E/CN.6/2012/16)

Social and human rights questions (*continued*)

(a) Advancement of women (E/2012/4 and E/2012/27-E/CN.6/2012/16)

1. **Ms. Kamara** (Observer for Liberia), Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, said that the Commission's inability, at its fifty-sixth session, to bridge divergent views and adopt agreed conclusions on the priority theme on the empowerment of rural women had been a great setback for rural women and girls as well as for the Commission.

2. There could be no doubt about the key role of the Commission on the Status of Women as the principal global norm-setting and policy-making body on gender equality and the advancement of women. Its annual sessions brought together gender equality advocates from Governments, civil society and the United Nations system. It was incumbent upon all Member States to ensure tangible results, including by reviewing working methods and recognizing that consensus would require compromise.

3. The priority theme of the fifty-seventh session would be the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. She trusted that the discussions at that session would break new ground in terms of commitments to end that scourge. The Commission membership should focus unwaveringly on the goals of eliminating discrimination and violence against women and achieving true and substantive equality for women and girls.

4. **Mr. Makriyiannis** (Observer for Cyprus), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that gender equality was a fundamental right enshrined in the Treaty on European Union and guaranteed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It was a value strongly present in the external action of the European Union as well.

5. While significant progress towards gender equality had been made in certain sectors such as education, the gender equality objectives set out in the Millennium Development Goals were far from being achieved. Maternal mortality remained pervasive, and sexual and gender-based violence was a daily occurrence. The standards contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development must be upheld and their implementation prioritized. It was important to guard against any attempts to backtrack from or dilute those standards.

6. It was regrettable that no agreed conclusions had been adopted at the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. A text of concrete relevance to rural women worldwide, addressing their rights, situation and challenges, would have been welcome. Mobilizing the full productive potential of women was essential for economic and sustainable growth, especially in the case of rural women, who in many countries were the backbone of local and national food and nutrition security and a critical force in promoting development. Their empowerment had been shown to increase production and productivity, raise household incomes, significantly improve child health and education levels and facilitate successful adaptation to climate change impacts.

7. The right to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to sexual and reproductive health was of particular importance. The European Union would work actively to ensure that health systems provided information and services that addressed the sexual and reproductive health needs of women, including family planning. Harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation must also be addressed. The Commission's decision to bring the issue of female genital mutilation to the General

Assembly was welcome; the European Union would support further action by the Group of African States in that regard. The Commission's adoption of a comprehensive resolution on maternal mortality was also appreciated.

8. Lastly, the European Union encouraged the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), whose work had already triggered positive developments in areas such as economic empowerment and political participation, to continue to play a proactive role in supporting the Commission's work and facilitating the conclusion of the strongest possible intergovernmental agreements on gender equality.

9. **Ms. Morgan** (Mexico) said that the high level and number of participants in the Commission's sessions, who came from Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector, attested to the priority attached to gender issues by the international community.

10. As had been noted during the general debate on the priority theme of the Commission's fifty-sixth session, rural girls and women represented one quarter of the world's population, and their empowerment was essential for overcoming poverty and hunger and achieving sustainable development. However, the Commission had been unable to adopt agreed conclusions in that regard because the negotiations had not reflected the issue's acknowledged importance. Recommendations in that area could have guided public policy and had a real impact on the lives of millions of rural women.

11. Her delegation was concerned about the trend towards retrogression on the gender equality agenda, which had been built with great effort. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was the embodiment of that agenda and should continue to guide efforts to achieve full gender equality.

12. **Ms. Arias Orozco** (El Salvador) said that her delegation welcomed the recently adopted system-wide action plan on gender equality, the development of which had been led by UN-Women, and looked forward to receiving further information on evaluation mechanisms in that regard. Reliable, comparable indicators were essential for the promotion of gender-sensitive policies and strategies. Her delegation also welcomed the establishment of new partnerships and a

new regional architecture to promote gender equality in a decentralized manner.

13. As had been recognized at the most recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, rural women faced double discrimination. Their empowerment and active participation in development should be promoted through measures to improve their access to financing, ownership of assets and training.

14. El Salvador had made significant progress in that regard through its national policy for women, which included programmes and mechanisms for rural women. Citizens' advisory councils had been set up to enable women to play a leading role in monitoring gender equality policies, laws, programmes and projects.

15. **Mr. Shapoval** (Ukraine) said that Ukraine, as a member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, would continue working to reduce gender inequality in all spheres, including decision-making and leadership, and to eliminate violence against women and trafficking in women.

16. Since 2005, Ukraine had made substantial progress in promoting gender policies. It had adopted a policy framework for mainstreaming gender equality in its national five-year action plans, as well as an institutional mechanism on gender equality and a representative for the protection of children's rights, equality and non-discrimination. A parliamentary bill to improve the gender balance in high-ranking legislative and executive positions was currently under consideration.

17. Ukraine condemned all forms of violence against women and, in particular, trafficking in women and girls. It welcomed the activities of the working group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice established under Human Rights Council resolution 15/23. Ukraine had recently brought its domestic law into conformity with the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

18. His delegation agreed with the Commission on the Status of Women that the rights and priorities of women in rural areas remained insufficiently addressed in national and local legal frameworks and development policies. It was also necessary to protect the rights of women migrant workers, who faced specific problems by reason of their gender.

19. **Mr. Sarki** (Nigeria) said that because unrestricted access to gender-disaggregated data for national planning was important for the promotion of gender equality, the National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria was working to collate relevant data for planning purposes. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development engaged in gender-responsive budgeting to make funding available for high-impact interventions for women and children. International conventions on women were reflected in domestic legislation that promoted zero tolerance for gender-based violence, genital mutilation and discrimination, including in the areas of education and employment.

20. UN-Women, which had been established in response to the multifaceted challenges faced by women and girls worldwide, should be at the centre of efforts to mainstream the gender perspective into all United Nations policies and programmes. An improved framework for national collaboration and coordination with United Nations country teams was needed to ensure that scarce resources were harnessed and that interventions targeted the most vulnerable. Nigeria intended to improve its partnership with the resident coordinator system and scale up evidence-based, gender-responsive pro-poor interventions. It supported the launch of the system-wide action plan on gender equality, which would include a standard gender assessment tool for monitoring and evaluating national gender equality interventions. His delegation also called for a human and financial resources arrangement to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

21. **Ms. Khvan** (Russian Federation) said that the Commission on the Status of Women was a unique forum for constructive dialogue on gender issues among all regional groups of States. Her delegation trusted that close cooperation between the Commission and UN-Women would enhance both entities' ability to achieve their respective goals.

22. Efforts were under way in the Russian Federation to ensure work/life balance and equal access to education and employment for women. The Russian Federation was committed to giving women a greater role in the social and economic spheres and as entrepreneurs. Women held two out of every five managerial positions in small and medium-sized enterprises in the country.

23. A high-level international conference on the implementation of the International Labour Organization's decent work agenda, to be held in Moscow in December 2012 at the initiative of President Putin, would include consideration of gender issues.

24. **Mr. Fiallo** (Ecuador) said that advances in gender equality in his country would not have been possible without the unceasing efforts of Ecuadorian women of indigenous, African and mixed descent.

25. The Fourth World Conference on Women had strengthened the recognition of women's human rights in Ecuador, with the result that they had been embodied in the Constitution. Mechanisms were in place to enforce the prohibition of all forms of violence and discrimination against women based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, age or sexual identity or orientation.

26. The State was implementing a cross-sartorial policy to eradicate gender-based violence, in line with the relevant recommendations of the Commission on the Status of Women. It had recently launched a campaign against domestic violence and gender-based violence, which had included the country's first national survey on the subject. The survey had revealed that six out of every ten Ecuadorian women had experienced such violence.

27. Ecuador had been one of the sponsors of Commission resolution 56/4, entitled "Indigenous women: key actors in poverty and hunger eradication", the implementation of which had been called for by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The recent visit to Ecuador by the Executive Director of UN-Women had been much appreciated.

28. **Ms. Cousens** (United States of America) said that it was regrettable that the negotiations on the draft agreed conclusions of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission had broken down over attempts to weaken references to principles enshrined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. As a result of the unwillingness of some delegations to acknowledge the importance of promoting and protecting reproductive rights for rural women, a potentially useful road map to strengthen rural women's contributions to development had been lost. Members of the Commission were urged to work together to avoid a similar outcome in future.

The crucial progress made thus far on women's empowerment must be regarded as a floor and not a ceiling, and must serve as a foundation for further progress in all United Nations forums that strove to advance women's empowerment.

29. **Mr. Ruidiaz** (Chile) said that Commission resolutions 56/2 on gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters and 56/4 on indigenous women recognized the crucial role of women in natural disaster prevention, response and reconstruction, the role of rural women as development agents and the need to invest in rural women.

30. Chile's support for the report on the fifty-sixth session of the Commission and the resolutions that had been adopted, particularly resolution 56/3 on eliminating maternal mortality and morbidity through the empowerment of women, did not signify acceptance of abortion. That would run counter to the Chilean Constitution, which protected life from the moment of conception.

31. Chile was strongly committed to gender mainstreaming, gender equality and the empowerment of women. It had recently extended maternity leave for working women from three to six months and instituted employment subsidies for women in the most vulnerable sectors.

32. **Ms. Melnikovich** (Belarus) said that her Government's generous funding of social protection, education and health care had enabled it to achieve goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals. National measures to promote and protect women's rights must be supported by international efforts to eliminate factors which had a negative impact on gender equality. Poverty, unemployment and a lack of social and economic guarantees made women more vulnerable, especially to human trafficking.

33. The Commission's inability to reach consensus on the draft agreed conclusions on rural women was cause for concern. Individual States must not be allowed to block negotiated agreements in order to advance their political ambitions. The Economic and Social Council should adopt measures to prevent such negative precedents.

34. **Mr. Dub** (Observer for the Czech Republic) said that the United Nations had made progress in creating frameworks for the integration of gender principles in all its activities and that gender markers would soon be

used by all of its funds and programmes. The Czech Republic, in its development cooperation strategy and in international forums, stressed the role of women in development and regarded gender equality as one of the main cross-cutting issues of Czech development assistance, to be reflected in every project. In its development projects, the Czech Republic paid considerable attention to women's education and other aspects of their status in society, as well as issues such as maternal health and nutrition, female entrepreneurship and women's role in rural development. Such activities would be sustainable only if they involved local governmental and non-governmental actors.

35. Women had a key role to play in sustainable development efforts. Lastly, an important long-term element of the Czech Republic's humanitarian assistance was aimed at preventing sexual violence and providing comprehensive assistance to its victims.

36. **Ms. Davidovich** (Observer for Israel) said that wherever free and powerful women were found, there were also flourishing and vibrant societies.

37. Her Government strongly supported the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The United Nations had an important role to play in breathing life into those commitments.

38. Israel was honoured to serve as Chair of the working group on communications of the Commission on the Status of Women. Unfortunately, the draft agreed conclusions on rural women had not been adopted at the Commission's fifty-sixth session. Rural women were pillars in their communities, and empowering them often meant ending hunger, breaking the cycle of poverty and planting the seeds of security, prosperity and peace.

39. Gender equality and women's empowerment must be mainstreamed across the full range of United Nations activity. UN-Women could not do that work alone. All societies must strive to improve the status of women, fight injustice and encourage women to teach, vote and become leaders. Gender stereotypes that justified discrimination against women must be rejected; only a change of attitude would ensure the truly equal status of women in the future.

40. Israel fully supported the new gender equality strategy of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to be reflected in the Programme's strategic plan for 2014-2017. Much of Israel's development work was dedicated to the promotion of women's rights, with a specific focus on education and women's economic empowerment, which better equipped women to combat gender-based violence and discrimination.

41. Early and forced marriage, harmful traditional practices and female genital mutilation must be addressed seriously. Women must have access to health services and information on their sexual and reproductive rights. The empowerment of women and girls should be a central pillar of the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. Gender mainstreaming was not a goal, but a strategy; the ultimate goal was full gender equality.

42. **Mr. Guerber** (Switzerland) said that the negotiations on the draft agreed conclusions at the fifty-sixth session of the Commission had been characterized by disparate positions on existing policy norms and standards established by the international community over the course of decades. The common terminology used in policy instruments drafted in the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly or adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the International Conference on Population and Development had been challenged. As a result, the participants had had to be reminded repeatedly of the existence of norms and provisions adopted as part of international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

43. The Commission's inability to adopt an agreed text was indicative of a lack of consensus on strengthening political and legal norms on women's issues. In that context, it should be recalled that women's rights, like all human rights, were universal, inalienable and indivisible and were the foundation for balanced social development.

44. **Ms. King** (Australia) said that the Commission could increase the likelihood that it would be able to adopt agreed conclusions by embarking on its discussions and negotiations prior to the start of the session and well ahead of the arrival of high-level participants. That would be especially important at the

next session, given its priority theme of violence against women. The failure to adopt agreed conclusions at the fifty-sixth session had been a great disservice to the many rural women who had overcome major challenges, such as financial costs, distance and time away from work and family, to participate in the Commission's session, bringing with them the hopes of rural women everywhere. The lack of agreed conclusions should not affect the commitment to promote awareness of the issues facing rural women. The barriers of discrimination faced by rural and other women in situations of vulnerability had been highlighted in a call to action issued by the Executive Director of UN-Women at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and signed by women Heads of State, including the Prime Minister of Australia.

45. Her delegation welcomed the initiative by the Chair of the Commission to prepare a summary of the discussions at the fifty-sixth session, highlighting the areas of agreement. It was important to preserve those gains so that further advances could be made in the future. There must be a commitment to secure outcomes on all issues that had an impact on gender equality, no matter how contentious. Lastly, her delegation welcomed the adoption of the United Nations system-wide action plan on gender equality, gender markers and country team performance indicators.

46. **Mr. dos Santos** (Brazil) said that UN-Women had proved to be an essential player in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide, despite its very limited resources and the fact that it had been in existence for a mere year and a half. It had shown progress in all of the six main thematic areas of work endorsed by the Executive Board. The initiative to adopt the system-wide action plan on gender equality was deeply anchored in the mandate provided by General Assembly resolution 64/289, especially paragraph 52, which determined that the establishment of UN-Women and the conduct of its work should lead to more effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system. As a member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, Brazil looked forward to the consideration of the Entity's regional architecture review, which, it trusted, would result in a more dynamic, decentralized and cohesive UN-Women that would be better able to deliver on its ambitious mandate.

47. **Ms. Bahar** (Indonesia) said that in rural Indonesia, women were on the front lines of efforts to combat poverty and fuel growth. Many ran small home industries and provided employment to others.

48. A gender perspective had been integrated into various Government policies, programmes and budgeting processes. Poor women had been given access to microcredit, which had uplifted households and communities mired in difficult economic circumstances.

49. Women played an important role in enhancing household food security and promoting rural development through their contribution to agriculture. Women were increasingly interested in pursuing higher education in agriculture so that they could build agriculture programmes in rural areas following graduation.

50. It was important that women should be protected from violence and receive access to health care; Indonesia was improving the capacity of law enforcement to combat violence against women. In addition, increased health expenditures in Indonesia promoted the health of women and their families and the life skills of adolescents.

51. Her delegation deeply regretted the Commission's failure to adopt agreed conclusions at its fifty-sixth session, and trusted that that setback would not affect its future ability to adopt recommendations and policies on gender equality and empowerment of women worldwide.

52. **Mr. Rutilo** (Argentina) said that his delegation was disappointed by the Commission's inability to adopt agreed conclusions on a theme as important as that of rural women, and was concerned about the incipient tendency towards reversal of the progress made on sensitive gender issues. He hoped that the Commission's fifty-seventh session would yield tangible results on the priority theme of the elimination of violence against women.

53. **Mr. Kimura** (Japan) said that his Government commended the success of UN-Women in achieving results on several aspects of its strategic plan only a year after it had come into operation. In addition, the United Nations system-wide action plan provided the Organization with common measures for assessing progress on its gender activities.

54. Since gender mainstreaming needed to be promoted not only via cross-cutting efforts but also in thematic areas, his Government had sponsored a resolution on gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters, which had been adopted by consensus at the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. His delegation hoped that United Nations Member States and agencies would include gender in their consideration of natural disasters, as had been the case at the World Ministerial Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Tohoku, Japan, in July 2012, at which participants had stressed that due consideration should be given to vulnerable individuals, including pregnant women, and that the building of resilient communities required recognition of the role of women in disaster reduction and individual empowerment.

55. His Government also recognized the role of women in economic activities, and had launched a ministerial-level forum under Prime Minister Noda to boost growth through women's empowerment. The action plan adopted by the forum, which his Government would strive to implement, included awareness-raising for men and actions in support of women's employment.

56. His delegation regretted that the draft agreed conclusions on the empowerment of rural women had not been adopted at the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, since the Commission played a significant role in gender equality and women's advancement, and needed to send a clear message to the international community on the importance of women's empowerment.

Draft resolution entitled "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system" (E/2012/L.8)

57. **The President** drew attention to draft resolution E/2012/L.8, entitled "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system", and indicated that it had no programme budget implications.

58. *Draft resolution E/2012/L.8 was adopted.*

Recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-sixth session (E/2012/27-E/CN.6/2012/16)

Draft decision entitled “Ending female genital mutilation”

59. **The President** drew attention to chapter I, section A, of the report, which contained a draft decision entitled “Ending female genital mutilation”.

60. *The draft decision was adopted.*

61. **Ms. Bonkougou Ouédraogo** (Burkina Faso) said that violence against women, which remained widespread despite international efforts, was a major global concern. Female genital mutilation was a disabling form of violence affecting millions of women. It had harmful physical and psychological effects, and stronger efforts were needed to eliminate it. Her delegation therefore welcomed the adoption of the draft decision and hoped that it would also be adopted by the General Assembly, since that would allow intensified global awareness-raising and stronger measures at the national and regional levels.

Draft resolution entitled “Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women”

62. **The President** drew attention to chapter I, section B, of the report, which contained a draft resolution entitled “Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women”. The draft resolution had been adopted by the Commission by a recorded vote of 29 to 2, with 10 abstentions. He understood that a recorded vote in the Council had been requested on the draft resolution.

63. **Ms. Robl** (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that her delegation was disappointed with the draft resolution. Her Government was committed to supporting the Palestinian people; its interest in improving humanitarian conditions was reflected in its support of groundbreaking programmes integrating gender into the public reform and development process and creating environments enabling Palestinian women to advance and lead.

64. Her Government was the largest bilateral donor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and contributed significantly to other United Nations programmes assisting Palestinian women. It remained

concerned about the situation in Gaza, where reports indicated that Hamas had limited women’s fundamental rights, in particular freedom of movement, freedom of assembly and access to public spaces, and that women were increasingly the targets of so-called “ethical” crimes. Her delegation supported efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of Gazans and would continue to work with the Palestinian Authority, Israel and international partners to improve the lives of ordinary people.

65. However, her delegation was troubled by the Council’s consideration of politicized issues and one-sided condemnations, which were a distraction from the real challenges. The Council should focus on its members’ shared goals; the draft resolution under consideration did not advance their common interests or those of Palestinian women, and was unhelpful to all involved.

66. In May 2011, President Obama had set out his vision for a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, involving two States enjoying self-determination, mutual recognition and peace. Her Government would work with the parties, the Quartet and other international partners to bring about the resumption of direct negotiations, which were the only way for the parties to resolve their differences.

67. **The President**, in reply to a question from Ms. Fahmy (Egypt), said that the vote had been requested by the delegation of the United States of America.

68. A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Argentina, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Lesotho, Libya, Mexico, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Senegal, Turkey, Zambia.

Against:

Canada, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Australia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

69. *The draft resolution was adopted by 30 votes to 2, with 18 abstentions.*

70. **Mr. Morrill** (Canada) said that his delegation had voted against the draft resolution because of its concern over the large number of unbalanced resolutions on the Middle East which had unfairly singled out Israel without addressing the complexity of the issues.

71. **The President** asked whether any delegation wished to make a general statement.

72. **Ms. Davidovich** (Observer for Israel) said that the draft resolution had no place in the Council. While her delegation was in favour of strengthening the Council's role, the draft resolution was a destructive diversion that undermined its credibility as an impartial and professional body.

73. The draft resolution was an injustice to Palestinian women, whose true oppressors were not mentioned in the text. Many United Nations documents had illustrated the inequality, repression and violence against women that were inherent in Palestinian society. Gender discrimination was embedded in Palestinian policies, and was particularly dire under Hamas in the Gaza Strip, where the so-called morality police harassed men and women who were found to be mixing openly. Women were prohibited from riding bicycles, and faced beating and imprisonment for dressing immodestly. Hamas continued to shutter civil-society organizations which tried to protect women's rights.

74. The draft resolution was inadequate and misleading, did nothing to address the real challenges faced by women in Palestinian society and gave cover to their oppressors. If its sponsors had been genuinely interested in improving the situation of Palestinian women, they would not have neglected so many of the factors which exacerbated their plight.

75. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that her delegation was grateful to the Council members that had voted in favour of the draft resolution and to the sponsoring countries for their unwavering support for the Palestinian people's rights and well-being. The adoption of the draft resolution was particularly important given the stark escalation of illegal Israeli policies and practices, such as the confiscation of land for the settlement campaign, the demolition of Palestinian homes and further displacement of women

and their families, and the blockade of the Gaza Strip. Those policies and practices, rather than the adoption of the draft resolution, were the real impediment to peace.

76. Since Palestinian women and girls bore the brunt of Israel's illegal practices, the draft resolution rightly called on the international community to protect their human rights and to intensify its efforts to improve their situation.

77. The statement made by the observer for Israel had clearly been intended to shift the Council's attention away from Israel's abuses against Palestinian civilians. The brutality of the occupation, and the illegal practices and policies manifested in Israel's humiliating and dehumanizing treatment of the Palestinian people, were the major obstacle to the advancement of Palestinian women. The draft resolution was needed because Palestinians were living under a military occupation that violated international law every day, resulting in untold misery and suffering.

78. Her delegation called on Israel to focus on its Government's actions instead of ignoring its status as an occupying Power and attempting to misrepresent the situation, and to heed the international community's calls to end the occupation and human rights abuses. That was the only way to empower Palestinian women and bring peace.

Draft decision entitled "Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-sixth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-seventh session of the Commission"

79. **The President** drew attention to chapter I, section C, of the report, which contained a draft decision entitled "Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-sixth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-seventh session of the Commission".

80. *The draft decision was adopted.*

81. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Council) said that chapter II, paragraph 30, of the report of the Commission should have read "Also at the 19th meeting, since no agreed conclusions on the priority theme were adopted, the Chair announced that she would be preparing a Chair's summary reflecting the course of discussion, which will be posted on the website".

82. **Ms. Khvan** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation had serious questions about the content of the Chair's summary of the Commission's discussions. The inclusion in that summary of elements of the draft agreed conclusions on which consensus had not been reached violated the established practice of not publicizing texts that were still the object of ongoing work. Moreover, the established United Nations practice of preparing such summaries in close cooperation with Member States had not been followed. A letter which the Russian delegation had addressed to the Chair of the Commission on 6 July 2012 had referred to those issues. The Russian delegation strongly hoped that elements that had not been agreed to as part of the agreed conclusions would promptly be removed from the summary.

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits *(continued)*

(b) Review and coordination of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 *(continued)* (E/2012/33; E/2012/L.12 and L.29)

Draft resolution entitled "Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020" (E/2012/L.29)

83. **The President** drew attention to draft resolution E/2012/L.29, entitled "Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020".

84. *Draft resolution E/2012/L.29 was adopted.*

85. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Observer for Nepal), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that those countries welcomed the adoption of draft resolution E/2012/L.29 by consensus. The aim of the draft resolution was to ensure early implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action by all stakeholders, in order to enable the least developed countries to meet the graduation criteria by 2020. It attempted to address the implementation gaps identified in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action (E/2012/75-A/67/88), and underlined the need for particular attention to be paid to the least developed countries' concerns in international processes.

86. The adoption of the draft resolution reaffirmed the least developed countries' commitment to take

expeditiously the actions agreed on in the Istanbul Programme of Action. He was confident that the partners would work together to implement the Programme in a spirit of renewed partnership, to enable the least developed countries to achieve sustainable development and graduate from the least developed country category.

87. *Draft resolution E/2012/L.12 was withdrawn.*

Coordination, programme and other questions *(continued)*

(f) African countries emerging from conflict *(continued)* (E/2012/L.28)

Draft decision entitled "African countries emerging from conflict" (E/2012/L.28)

88. **The President** drew attention to draft decision E/2012/L.28, entitled "African countries emerging from conflict", and indicated that it had no programme budget implications.

89. *Draft decision E/2012/L.28 was adopted.*

90. **The President** said he took it that the Council wished to take note of the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2011/12 (E/2012/67) and the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its fifty-second session (A/67/16).

91. *It was so decided.*

Social and human rights questions *(continued)*

(g) Human rights *(continued)* (E/2012/L.24 and L.31)

Draft resolution entitled "Report of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" (E/2012/L.24)

92. **The President** drew attention to a statement of programme budget implications (E/2012/L.31) of draft resolution E/2012/L.24 and read out the following revisions to the draft resolution: the second preambular paragraph should read "Recalling General Assembly resolution 66/254 of 23 February 2012, which launched the intergovernmental process of the General Assembly on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, and recognizing in this regard that a long-term solution to the problem of the backlog of reports can be found in this context"; and, in the fifth preambular paragraph,

the words “in this regard” should be replaced by “to improve the efficiency of its working methods”.

93. *Draft resolution E/2012/L.24, as amended, was adopted.*

94. **Ms. Nemroff** (United States of America) said that the persistent backlog of country reports to treaty bodies was a concern and a challenge to the ability of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to fully discharge its responsibilities. Her Government firmly supported the goal of enhancing the effectiveness of the treaty body system, but there were limits to its ability to provide the resources necessary to implement some of the measures discussed. United States funding for contributions to international organizations had decreased significantly, and calls for closer attention to the use and effectiveness of that funding had increased. Because of those constraints, Member States which were major contributors had requested that the United Nations regular budget should not increase beyond the level agreed to in December 2011. Resource implications must be kept firmly in mind when developing proposals, and resource allocations must be tied to improvements in the efficiency of the treaty body system as a whole.

95. Her Government doubted that the extension of the Committee’s session would be sufficient in itself to address the issue of report backlogs. After extensive consideration of alternatives for addressing the backlog, the United States had concluded that it must dissociate itself from the consensus on the resolution, albeit without prejudice to the ongoing consultations under General Assembly resolution 66/254.

96. Her delegation urged the Committee to use the additional week per year of meeting time to pilot improvements in working methods and other fiscally prudent measures to increase efficiency. It recognized and respected the Committee’s independence in determining its working methods and would welcome the Committee’s ideas on how best to implement changes that would cut costs and increase effectiveness.

97. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that his delegation dissociated itself from the consensus on the resolution; it had engaged constructively in the discussions and regretted that not all of its proposals had been accommodated.

98. His Government was strongly committed to human rights. Although the backlog of country reports was a genuine problem for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which had made proposals to improve its working methods, the temporary extension of meeting time was premature, since the effects of those proposals had yet to be seen.

99. Backlogs affected the majority of treaty bodies, and previous temporary extensions of meeting time had not solved the problem, as acknowledged by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in her June 2012 report on strengthening the United Nations human rights treaty body system (A/66/860). His delegation was therefore fully committed to the wider process of treaty body strengthening, which aimed to address the underlying causes of the backlog and find holistic solutions. It was short-sighted to allocate scarce resources to temporary solutions that did not address the underlying problems.

100. Since his delegation believed that the strengthening process would not yield results until 2014, it would support the one-week temporary extension for 2013, but was disappointed that a temporary extension had been granted for 2014 with no explicit link to that process.

101. The resolution provided for two pre-session meetings in 2013 in order, his delegation understood, to prepare for the additional weeks of meeting time in 2013 and 2014. His delegation urged the Committee to restrict the attendance of experts at the pre-session meetings to the absolute minimum, in view of the additional costs that would be incurred.

102. **Mr. Kimura** (Japan) said that while the problem of the backlog needed to be addressed, a long-term rather than ad hoc solution was essential. The use of additional resources must be minimized, since regular-budget resources were severely constrained. For reasons of financial discipline, his delegation was concerned about the approval of the two one-week extensions, but had decided to join the consensus in the expectation that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights would improve the efficiency of its working methods in response to the resolution.

103. **The President** drew attention to the note by the Secretariat on the results of the forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (E/2012/4); the report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for and

observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 (E/2012/3-A/67/61); the report of the Board of Trustees on major activities of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (E/2012/69); the report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2011 (E/INCB/2011/1); the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/2012/51 and Corr.1); and the report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (A/67/41). He took it that the Council wished to take note of those documents.

104. *It was so decided.*

Economic and environmental questions (*continued*)

(d) Human settlements (*continued*) (E/2012/L.13 and L.33)

Draft resolution entitled "Human settlements" (E/2012/L.33)

105. **The President** drew attention to draft resolution E/2012/L.33, entitled "Human settlements", and indicated that it had no programme budget implications.

106. *Draft resolution E/2012/L.33 was adopted.*

107. *Draft resolution E/2012/L.13 was withdrawn.*

(g) Public administration and development (*continued*) (E/2012/L.23 and L.27)

Draft resolution entitled "Report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration at its eleventh session" (E/2012/L.23)

108. **The President** drew attention to draft resolution E/2012/L.23, entitled "Report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration at its eleventh session", and indicated that it had no programme budget implications.

109. *Draft resolution E/2012/L.23 was adopted.*

Draft decision entitled "Venue, dates and provisional agenda for the twelfth session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration" (E/2012/L.27)

110. **The President** drew attention to draft decision E/2012/L.27, entitled "Venue, dates and provisional agenda for the twelfth session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration", and indicated that it had no programme budget implications.

111. *Draft decision E/2012/L.27 was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.