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Chair: Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname)

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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/67/179)
- (b) **Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family** (*continued*) (A/67/61-E/2012/3, A/67/153 and A/67/211)
- (c) **Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing** (*continued*) (A/67/188)

1. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile), referring to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/67/179), said that his delegation supported the view that inequalities had been exacerbated by the weak recovery of the global economy and that financial and food crises had disproportionately affected the poor in developing countries. Recognizing the high level of unemployment among young people, Chile had taken steps to improve their employability and to promote access to employment. Youth unemployment was a global problem and indigenous young men and women and people with disabilities were particularly disadvantaged.

2. In line with the recommendations of the report, Chile had recently extended the scope of its social protection programmes and adopted social policies that contributed to women's empowerment, gender equality and family support. Financial allowances had been awarded to families living in extreme poverty and to women in female-headed households in employment. The extension of maternity leave from three to six months benefited all working women; and further measures had been introduced to promote female employability and entrepreneurship. A food solidarity bond had been issued to reduce the impact of rising food prices.

3. A national service for the elderly in Chile promoted active ageing and the development of social services in order to strengthen the participation of elderly people in society, promote their autonomy and

encourage the recognition of their rights. Some 2.6 million people, or 15 per cent of the population in Chile, were aged 60 years and older; by 2025 that figure was expected to reach 20 per cent, thereby exceeding the percentage of the population under 15 years. Chile had adopted a policy on positive ageing in order to promote the rights of the elderly.

4. The establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing provided an opportunity to identify the measures needed to address deficiencies in the international protection framework of human rights for older persons. To that end, Chile supported the appointment of a special rapporteur and the possible drafting of an international convention that would raise awareness of the importance of the interests of the elderly.

5. Particular emphasis had been placed on the health of young people in Chile, where steps had been taken to combat smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity, and the school curriculum had been modified to promote physical exercise and healthy eating. Annual health checks for adolescents had been introduced through a health management programme. Scholarships and grants were provided for the poorest pupils and for those from indigenous populations. Recently passed laws promoted quality in education and harmonized the funding of higher education.

6. The responsibilities of the Ministry of Social Development had been expanded so that it could implement policies and joint ministerial initiatives aimed at fighting poverty and protecting the vulnerable. Through its membership in the Commission for Social Development in 2013, Chile would contribute to the target of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and, thereafter, to the continuing promotion of the development agenda.

7. **Ms. Suarez Ortiz** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, said that half of the world's population was under the age of 25, and young people had a positive and innovative contribution to make to the international agenda. Some 36 per cent of Mexico's population was aged between 12 and 20 years and, in common with many other parts of the world, it suffered from high levels of unemployment. A lack of jobs forced many young people to participate in the informal sector, an issue that she hoped would be addressed within the United Nations, in particular with

regard to human development and healthy working conditions.

8. There was a need to improve dialogue between young people and their governments; young people were keen to contribute to society and have their voices heard. The United Nations should develop an inclusive and equitable model that would allow all to participate in civil society, including indigenous populations, migrants and people with disabilities. Mexico recognized the rights of people with disabilities and was a contributor to the Trust Fund established by the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD).

9. It was important to develop social and public policies in order to promote the human rights of an increasingly ageing population. Implementation of policies that protected the vulnerable should not be delayed as a result of the financial crisis; Mexico had maintained the level of its social budget in the current year, thereby strengthening the institutions through which it combated poverty and hunger. All Member States should work towards the eradication of poverty, inter alia, by achieving the MDGs and pursuing the development agenda beyond 2015.

10. **Ms. Abubakar** (Libya) reaffirmed Libya's commitment to the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Plan of Action and to the achievement of the MDGs despite the challenges experienced by her country's transitional government. Programmes had been established to train men, women and young people, including combatants of the former regime and to promote their employment. Housing was being provided, and other measures to combat poverty were being pursued. Social protection of vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, was a priority. Libya had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008 and would soon ratify that treaty.

11. In pursuit of the first Millennium Development Goal — to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, Libya had introduced social security programmes and retirement benefits. In addition to the adverse impacts of the global financial crisis, which impeded the Government's efforts to meet its social obligations, the armed conflict in 2011 had created many economic and social problems, not least through the destruction of the educational and health infrastructure. Job creation, combating corruption and the provision of services,

including water and electricity to those in rural areas, remained challenges.

12. Libya would continue to use its resources to build a future in which the development of youth remained a priority. Lastly, in the context of achieving social development for all, she deplored the continued deterioration of the living conditions of Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories.

13. **Ms. Velichko** (Belarus) said that the financial and economic crisis had demonstrated the vulnerability of citizens and the need to develop effective strategies to overcome poverty and inequality. Belarus had made it a priority to support the most vulnerable social groups, including people with disabilities, orphans and youth, by providing social assistance for the purchase of medicine, technical resources for social reintegration and food for children under two years of age. Employment was guaranteed to families raising children, and financial allowances and maternity benefits were paid to them.

14. Pensions had been increased in 2012, and additional payments were made to women over the age of 75 and to men over 80. Belarus had received assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in preparing for its accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in conducting a national survey of the situation of disabled persons. A network of centres in Belarus provided social and residential care for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

15. An unemployment insurance scheme that would benefit young people in particular was under consideration. Recognizing the importance of investing in youth, Belarus had been instrumental in organizing a roundtable on fostering youth participation during the Economic and Social Council session in July 2012 and welcomed the Secretary General's plan to appoint a Special Adviser for Youth. Lastly, Belarus supported efforts to promote the interests of gifted children and to combat anti-social behaviour among young people.

16. **Ms. Kahara** (Kenya), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people represented the majority of Kenya's population. The need to place youth concerns at the forefront in order for Kenya to achieve middle-income status was set out in its Medium Term Plan 2008-2012. With that aim in mind, Kenya was promoting human development through the active and inclusive participation of different social

groups, including youth, in decision-making and the prudent management of national resources.

17. Youth unemployment was an acknowledged problem in Kenya, and young people continued to experience poverty, limited opportunities in education and technical training, and exposure to high levels of health and social risks. They also found it difficult to gain access to credit and influence the decision-making affecting their lives. Those disadvantages contributed to the slowing down of economies in developing countries and were hard to overcome given the global economic crisis and the competing demand for attention and resources.

18. The Ministry of Youth had set up on-the-job training to enable young people to access the jobs market, and the Government had developed enterprise funds for youth and women. There was a need to scale up vocational training for young people and special training for women, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups in order to enable them to participate in the labour market.

19. HIV/AIDS was a significant problem for youth in Kenya, who accounted for about 70 per cent of new infections. HIV/AIDS prevention was a part of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools, and nationwide awareness campaigns had been instituted. Although the prevalence rate had fallen between 2000 and 2012, educational efforts were often hampered through lack of resources, including teachers' lack of time and appropriate training, as well as reluctance on the part of parents and other stakeholders to discuss the issues involved. Furthermore, young people were not sufficiently consulted on the content of programmes that targeted them.

20. **Ms. Ndombi** (Kenya), speaking as a youth delegate, emphasized the importance of quality education that would equip young people with the skills required in the labour market of the twenty-first century. Kenya had invested heavily in education but lacked the resources to fully fund a national system. The Government had also invested in social development, promoting respect for human rights and the participation of civil society, while increasing transparency and accountability. She called on the United Nations to help improve the lives of young people and to encourage their employment in less conventional sectors such as information technology, music, the performing arts and sports.

21. Information technology, the fastest growing sector in Kenya, was proving an effective tool for development, fostering the sharing of information and opportunities. Kenyan youth had embraced technology and had made significant contributions to technology-related programmes, although the spread of technology to rural areas was slow. Young people would use their drive and energy to lead the way in expanding opportunities for development. The inclusion of youth in decision-making that affected their future was essential to the creation of a harmonious society. Kenya appealed for partnerships to continue its people-centred approach to development.

22. **Ms. Dudasova** (Slovakia), speaking as a youth delegate, asked whether young people were being given the support that they needed to make the discoveries and inventions of the future. Half of the world's population were young people in their most productive years, yet they were no longer accorded the credibility experienced by young inventors and entrepreneurs in previous centuries. It would be foolhardy to waste young people's potential, although it was not easy to foresee what type of education would best enable them to work in an unpredictable future.

23. A diploma no longer guaranteed a good job, and young people needed to approach the future in a different way. Creativity could be fostered without financial resources, and the knowledge acquired through education should not only be informative but should also lead to results. If youth were to be a priority they should be accorded trust and credibility as young people learned the most from those who expected the most from them.

24. **Mr. Tarar** (Pakistan) said that much remained to be done to achieve people-centred development based on education, full-employment and social integration. He agreed that the eradication of extreme poverty had been hampered by the global financial crisis and he supported the Secretary General's call to improve policy coherence and ensure adequate financing for effective social development. While facing a host of difficulties, his Government had focused on pro-poor economic growth. Its development programme recognized the crucial link between productive employment and social cohesion. It was also pursuing reforms to bring the poor and vulnerable into the development mainstream.

25. Pakistan had introduced a pioneer social protection programme through which female members of households received monthly income supplements and one member of each beneficiary family could obtain vocational training and an interest-free loan to finance a small business or self-employment. The programme also included education and health-assistance benefits. An old-age pension was provided to 4 million retired workers, and it was planned to expand the scheme to embrace those in the informal economy and self-employed workers.

26. Close to 70 per cent of the population of Pakistan was under the age of 30. Youth development and community engagement was one of the pillars of economic growth. Technical training programmes had been provided for young people, including through public-private partnerships. A quota of public sector jobs was provided for persons with disabilities to promote their participation in mainstream decision-making. The family remained the bedrock of social inclusion, care and protection. Pakistan looked forward to the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of Family in 2014, which would provide an opportunity to reiterate its respect for that time-tested institution.

27. **Mr. Manongi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his Government continued to implement the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development through its national strategic programme for poverty reduction. While progress had been made, some challenges remained, especially in respect of the country's high maternal and child mortality rates. Recognizing that rural development and agricultural productivity were essential to social development, poverty reduction and attaining the MDGs, the Government had introduced a programme to modernize and improve agricultural productivity.

28. Land reforms had been introduced that enabled women to become landowners and to be members of land tribunals. Emergency obstetric and newborn care had been improved through the provision of expanded primary health facilities. People-centred development and social inclusion had always formed the cornerstone of the Government's policy formulation, implementation and monitoring.

29. A decentralization programme had devolved powers to local government, ensuring the participation of people in the taking of decisions that affected their own development. Policies devoted to vulnerable

groups and to poverty reduction had been embraced. Lastly, his country recognized the strong links between poverty and disability and looked forward to the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development to be convened by the General Assembly in 2013.

30. **Ms. Sumi** (Japan) said that economic and social inequalities, adverse employment conditions and lack of economic opportunities had caused the disempowerment of many people. Action was required by the international community to address the widening gap between rich and poor and to promote the participation and fulfilment of youth. Youth unemployment was a serious issue that had the potential to disrupt social stability and hinder economic growth. Japan had developed an employment strategy for youth that included systematic career education and the creation of local employment support offices.

31. The rights of persons with disabilities had steadily improved since the 2006 adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In preparation for its ratification of the Convention, Japan had created a commission to develop policies in respect of persons with disabilities, and disabled persons were among its members. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, provided guidance to many countries experiencing a rapid increase in the number of ageing persons. Japan attached great importance to the review of the Plan of Action to take place in 2013.

32. Japan welcomed the recent adoption of General Assembly resolution 66/290, which set out a common understanding on human security: an approach to address serious threats to the survival, livelihoods and dignity of people, to protect individuals and to empower them to cope with threats, thereby building a better society. Accordingly, Japan would contribute \$10 million to the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security.

33. Noting that volunteerism could promote participation in society and deepen human relations, she called on delegations to support the draft resolution on that subject submitted to the Committee by Brazil and Japan. The increase in globalization and interdependence in society made it all the more necessary for the international community to assist vulnerable groups and promote their integration and empowerment. Japan would continue to contribute to that challenge.

34. **Mrs. Furman** (Israel) said that the principles of social development lay at the heart of Israeli law, culture and public policy. Israel subscribed to development strategies that were comprehensive and inclusive and partnered with countries all over the world to advance the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, MASHAV, lead the country's efforts in that field, focusing on education as a primary tool for development. The Government invested in education both at home and abroad and provided free education to all children in Israel from the age of three.

35. In September 2012, her Government had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an event that marked an important step towards realizing the MDGs for Israel's 1.5 million citizens with disabilities. A wide range of Israeli laws protected persons with disabilities. Israel agreed that disability should be included in the future global development agenda and therefore looked forward to the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development to be held by the General Assembly in 2013. Drawing on inspiration from Moses, one of the Jewish people's greatest leaders who also had a speech impediment, Israel would continue to strive for a world in which people with disabilities realized their full human and leadership potential.

36. **Mr. Kham-Inh Kitchadeth** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that progress to achieve social development goals had been very slow. Many developing countries would find it challenging to reach the MDGs by 2015 as a result of growing uncertainty in the global economy, the financial crisis in the euro zone and geopolitical tension in many parts of the world. Given the impact of trade barriers and other anti-crisis measures on vulnerable economies, he supported the view that external shocks could be countered by sustainable public sector investment, especially in the least developed countries.

37. Social development had always been at the core of the Lao Government's development strategy, and improving education, including access for women, ethnic and other marginalized groups, was a national priority. The Government sought to promote gender equality through education and the inclusion of women in decision-making in both the private and public sectors and to increase their participation in the workforce. Significant efforts had been made to

improve public health care, including the provision of free hospital care for the elderly. Health-care priorities included reducing maternal and child mortality rates, scaling up mother and child nutrition, promoting family planning, providing clean water and combating disease outbreaks.

38. The Government attached great importance to the protection of disabled persons and to their inclusion in the mainstream of society. His country had been heavily bombed during the Viet Nam war, and some 120 000 people had been injured as a result of cluster munitions or unexploded ordnance. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009, and the rights of disabled persons were protected under the country's labour laws, and through their access to education, physical and mental rehabilitation and employment. Disabled persons received assistance from the State and civil society in respect of their living conditions, and their rights were promoted through the Lao Disabled People's Association and other associations and training centres.

39. **Mr. Llorentty** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the current economic and financial crisis, which stemmed from capitalism, had brought about poverty, as well as crises in food, energy and the climate. His Government believed that it was not possible to achieve social development in the framework of the existing capitalist model. Although his country had not escaped the crises, it had been buffered by its ability to draw on its natural resources and to make a number of social improvements including in the reduction of extreme poverty. A total of 1 million people had been brought out of poverty completely as a result of the Government's social and economic policies.

40. A new social model had been introduced. Inspired by the cultures of the Andean region, it defined well-being not only in terms of economic growth and monetary wealth, but also social inclusion and the provision of education and health care. The role of the state was crucial to the new vision and to the quality of housing, electricity and other basic services that it provided. His country recognized and promoted the human right to water and sanitation as set out in General Assembly resolution 64/292 and had exceeded the target set in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with some 78 per cent of the population able to access clean drinking water.

41. The Bolivian health-care system was free of charge and available to all sectors of the community without discrimination. Education and training were also available to all, and UNESCO had acknowledged the country's success in eradicating illiteracy. Financial allowances were paid to all persons over the age of 60. Under the Constitution, persons with disabilities were protected by the State and had the right to free education, health care, communication in alternative languages, appropriate employment and fair remuneration.

42. Youth were a demographic group affected by social and economic vulnerability, which limited their potential to contribute to society and their ability to exercise their rights. The Bolivian Constitution guaranteed the protection of youth and their active participation in political, social, economic and cultural development. The building of more inclusive societies required the strengthening of international cooperation, technical assistance and the transfer of technology. The United Nations system had supported the development of national policies that helped his country in reaching the MDGs.

43. **Mr. Afamefuna Ossi** (Nigeria) said that, under his country's Constitution, social justice, the protection of liberties and rights and equitable development for all citizens were fundamental objectives. It was State policy to provide social security and to promote and protect the economic interests of all Nigerians, including vulnerable groups.

44. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, and other international instruments continued to be the springboard for advocacy and implementation of social development policies and programmes in Nigeria. The country had produced a draft national policy on ageing that would empower and alleviate poverty among older people; and programmes for income support and skill acquisition had been introduced.

45. The Government had drafted a national framework and plan of action on the family, and a fund had been set up to assist vulnerable families on the verge of destitution. Nigeria recognized the need to integrate discharged offenders and provided them with grants and vocational tools to enable them to lead productive lives and contribute to the well-being of

their families and wider society. The country was also conducting a survey of correctional facilities with a view to ensuring humane treatment of inmates.

46. National data had been collected in order to assist with the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes in respect of persons with disabilities. The Government had provided mobility appliances and educational materials for the training, rehabilitation and economic empowerment of persons with disabilities. Adjustments must be made to design infrastructures, policies, plans in that regard, and Governments must invest in all phases of life in order to build a society that met the needs of all groups.

47. **Mrs. Mcheka-Chilenje Nkhoma** (Malawi) said that the financial crisis of 2008-2009 had severely disrupted growth worldwide and caused significant setbacks in the achievement of the MDGs. It had been estimated that the rise in joblessness and vulnerability caused by the crisis had led to between 47 and 84 million people falling into or becoming trapped in extreme poverty. Malawi had embarked on a poverty eradication programme that focused on wealth and job creation, empowerment of women and youth and cash transfers to the rural poor.

48. The Government had developed a growth and development strategy through which it hoped to transform the country into one of Africa's fastest-growing economies. The newly elected President had also launched an economic recovery programme aimed at restoring macroeconomic stability in the medium term and securing the country's ability to meet its Millennium Development Goal targets. The programme would focus on agriculture, energy, infrastructure development, tourism and mining.

49. Malawi had a specific ministry to examine matters relating to the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2012, it had passed a law to ensure equal rights for persons with disabilities, and early detection, parent education and community integration had also been improved through frontline workers. Malawi was committed to creating a self-reliant nation that promoted and protected the welfare of all.

50. **Mr. Daham** (Iraq) said that social development enhanced the productive capacity of individuals, guaranteed social justice, and maximized the use of available resources. His Government had established a social, economic and political environment that gave priority to ensuring peace, stability, respect for human

rights, sustainable development, food security and the elimination of poverty. It had set up an international compact for a new partnership with the international community in order to promote prosperity and diversify production and had established the basis for a democratic, federal State and for Iraq's participation in the international economy.

51. His country had improved the education system and had reduced the gap between girls and boys at school. Non-discriminatory principles had been established for economic, cultural and social rights. Concerning the right to health, the Government provided free and low-cost health care, and child mortality had decreased since 2003 as a result, despite terrorist attacks. The war had had a negative impact on education attendance levels, but expenditures had been increased and the situation had improved since 2003. Free food had been provided to vulnerable sectors of the population, and monthly allowances had been paid to the elderly, to people with disabilities and the unemployed.

52. Iraq had also sought to improve employment opportunities, increase salaries and develop remote and rural areas. As a result of those measures, the number of citizens who did not have access to food had decreased. A study of the housing crisis had led to an increase in housing subsidies to finance the building of new housing and to a land distribution programme. The first national strategy for poverty reduction had been launched to increase the income of poor people and improve their health and education status and to reduce the gender gap and the disparity between rural and urban areas. Lastly, he called on the international community to invest in sustainable development in Iraq.

53. **Ms. Al-Muzaini** (Kuwait) said that the recommendations set out in paragraph 67 of the Secretary-General's report (A/67/179) would contribute to the achievement of social development, in particular, the creation of productive employment and decent work and the active participation of all social groups in decision-making. Her Government had provided grants and loans for social development to more than 100 developing countries throughout the world through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

54. Kuwait supported the measures identified in the Secretary-General's reports to ensure social protection for youth, families, children and persons with

disabilities. Kuwait invested significantly in human development, including in education. A project entitled "Kuwait is Listening" had been launched to identify youth aspirations, concerns and challenges and to act on the outcomes in the areas of education, culture, the arts, housing and sports.

55. Her country acknowledged the importance of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002. The Government had set up a committee to address the health problems of the elderly and to review national plans and strategies, recognizing that improving the living conditions of older persons was one of the most important development indicators.

56. Kuwait was making efforts to ensure the integration of persons with disabilities in society. In 2010, a law had been enacted, reflecting the commitment of the Government to meeting their needs. The promotion of development across the globe would depend on the international community's willingness to implement the agreements on that subject reached at various United Nations conferences.

57. **Mr. Román-Morey** (Peru) underlined the importance of the three themes in the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development: namely, poverty eradication, the expansion of productive employment and social integration. Peru was committed to the implementation of social inclusion programmes that would lead to the creation of more participative and just societies.

58. Economic growth, however, did not guarantee social development. States should promote not only growth, but also social progress, especially for the most excluded and vulnerable. The challenge for developing countries was to translate growth into improved quality of life. The State was ultimately responsible for implementing social inclusion policies that would ensure that the needs and just aspirations of all were met. Access to quality services and equal opportunities were essential for sustainable development, social inclusion, a stable democracy and transparent and responsible administration. Political and economic stability were required to achieve economic growth and overcome poverty.

59. The growth model necessary to achieve an inclusive society should include equal access to health care, education, food, housing, decent employment and social security, provided without discrimination and in accordance with national laws and international human

rights law. In Peru, the ministries responsible for development and social inclusion and for women and vulnerable populations adopted a coordinated and multisectoral approach in order to promote the economic, social, political and cultural inclusion of the most disadvantaged groups with the aim of reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs.

60. There was as a variety of programmes spanning pension provision, child nutrition initiatives and early detection and treatment of autism. Mechanisms were in place to identify those homes and individuals most in need of assistance. Peru had passed a law that ensured that indigenous peoples were formally consulted on any proposed laws or regulations affecting them. While it was the responsibility of States to promote social inclusion policies, their efforts would be all the more effective in a favourable international environment. For that reason, Peru called for a strengthening of international cooperation in that field, especially for developing countries.

61. **Mr. Golitsyn** (Ukraine) commended the work of the Commission for Social Development. Focusing on poverty eradication would enhance the ability of the international community to ensure social integration, reduce inequalities and promote employment and decent work for all. His delegation welcomed the adoption by consensus of the ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration 2012. Policies to boost productive capacity and employment and decent work were critical in the short term to curb the dramatic effects of the unemployment crisis and in the long term to create sustainable and inclusive economic growth. For that reason, the Declaration had placed productive employment “at the heart of actions to restore growth”.

62. Poverty reduction was a priority for the Government of Ukraine and the first goal in its national development strategy. Tackling poverty and social inclusion were at the heart of its economic reform programme for 2010-2014. A poverty reduction programme for the period up to 2015 set out ways to promote higher standards of living, job creation and smart systems for wages and pensions. Specific measures had been planned with regard to health care and social protection with particular attention to children, youth, the elderly and other vulnerable groups.

63. The President of Ukraine had instituted social initiatives aimed at improving income distribution, bridging social inequalities and developing a middle

class. The initiatives focused on four priority areas: renewing public confidence in social policies and reviving the principle of social justice; establishing effective income distribution mechanisms; modernizing the social protection system to deliver targeted social services for people with disabilities; and job creation to promote sustained economic growth. Evidence suggested that poverty reduction targets in Ukraine would be met by 2015. Significant progress had already been made: poverty had decreased and spending on poverty reduction had increased, while household income had risen by almost 14 per cent and real wages had increased by almost 9 per cent.

64. The Government had taken steps to counter the effects of the global economic and financial crisis and promote social and economic development, focusing on the wider involvement of young people, as well as the development of social and economic projects and education and re-training programmes. A broad reform of the pensions system had been introduced in 2012 to diminish the negative economic impact on the elderly.

65. Ukraine welcomed the decision by the General Assembly to hold a High-level Meeting on Disability and Development in 2013 as it would focus global attention on the situation of persons with disabilities. The Government had recently adopted a national action plan on implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in order to remove barriers and ensure the inclusion of disabled persons in community life.

66. **Mr. Faizal** (Maldives) said that the world faced a financial crisis, high levels of unemployment, food insecurity and income inequalities. Youth and other vulnerable groups faced many difficult challenges. The way in which young people shared their aspirations would influence current social and economic conditions as well as the livelihoods and well-being of future generations. It was important to help them realize their full potential, in particular through education. Universal access to education should be promoted, especially among vulnerable groups in developing countries.

67. He welcomed the Secretary-General’s Education First initiative, launched in September 2012, which should lead to improved access to quality education for children, young people and adults alike. The Maldives had made substantial investments in youth, which made up some 51 per cent of its population. The

Government was committed to carrying out policies to promote social awareness, advocacy, and vocational and training programmes aimed at encouraging young people to participate in economic and social activities and fostering political inclusion and social development. The Maldives also supported the hosting of a world conference on youth in Colombo in 2014, with a focus on the participation and involvement of youth in achieving the internationally agreed development goals.

68. His country's Constitution, adopted in 2008, guaranteed for the first time equal rights and fundamental freedoms for persons with disabilities. Following the Disability Act of 2010, the founding of a Disability Council had been a defining moment in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. As a party to the Convention, the Maldives was committed to promoting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities by explicitly including disability considerations in all national plans, policies and tools. The Maldives also welcomed the decision of the General Assembly to hold a High-level Meeting on Disability and Development in 2013.

69. The Maldives looked forward to the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014. Families were the most important agents for social integration and inclusion, and measures to promote family values through family centred policies would address a number of cross-cutting challenges on poverty reduction, access to education and adequate health care. The Government had established a new Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights in order to promote social policies and programmes. Sound family policymaking and the promotion of social protection nets and benefits would allow the Government to concentrate on achieving its social development objectives.

70. Social development posed unique challenges to small island developing States. While the Maldives had been advocating for increased international cooperation and participation in social development programmes, the geographic dispersal of populations and lack of financial and human resources had hindered progress. He, therefore, called on the international community to mobilise resources to support vulnerable groups in those States.

71. The Maldives would continue to formulate stable social policies and programmes promoting the inclusion of vulnerable groups in employment. The active participation of youth in developing countries fostered equality and stimulated economic growth. Participation in civil society and volunteer programmes in the Maldives had instilled a sense of responsibility in young people; and their inclusion in policy formulation and decision-making had encouraged an awareness of societal norms and challenges.

72. **Ms. Alsaleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, since the previous year, her country had undertaken a number of modernizing reforms with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The reforms embraced new concepts, creating comprehensive and integrated social and economic development policies. Unfortunately, the reforms had been hampered by economic and trade sanctions that had been imposed by certain hegemonic States and regional groups in a deliberate attempt to undermine the country's social and economic development. Those unilateral and unlawful sanctions had negatively affected many aspects of the life and livelihoods of Syrians. They had hampered the country's human rights efforts by depriving it of resources for bridging the gender gap and improving conditions for young people and families. The sanctions targeted social, economic and financial life, agriculture, food and medicine supplies, tourism, transport, science and culture. They had led to fluctuations in the exchange rate, a decline in purchasing power and rising inflation. The resulting shortage of financial resources had led to increased poverty and unemployment and had hampered the country's ability to import medicines, spare parts and other items that were essential for the provision of basic services.

73. She commended the Secretary-General's reports on social development but noted that they once again overlooked the catastrophic repercussions of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, the Syrian Golan and Lebanon. The reports also failed to mention the disabilities caused by weapons such as mines and cluster munitions. Attention should be given to those matters as well as to the severe harm caused by unilateral economic sanctions outside the framework of international law.

74. **Mr. Khan** (Indonesia) said that the expansion of the global economy had been coupled with growing inequality, worsening the situation of those who were already vulnerable and marginalized. It was clear that

the benefits of economic growth were not being shared equally and that the slow economic recovery had not significantly reduced unemployment. Workable anti-poverty strategies should be examined to gauge the way forward, and social protection systems strengthened in order to combat the intergenerational poverty trap. Indonesia continued to invest in human capital, which was essential for economic growth.

75. A key component of social development strategy had been the empowerment of family units and the provision of resources to vulnerable households. The celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family would be a further opportunity to strengthen the role of the family in social development. Families in Indonesia had also benefited from social assistance and protection programmes designed to meet the health needs of mothers, children, the elderly and disabled persons. Care was taken to protect the rights of older persons and to provide them with some measure of social security.

76. Indonesia had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011. Legislation to promote and protect the rights of disabled persons had been drafted, and a national disability action plan had been launched. The Government also provided strong support to non-governmental organizations that assisted persons with disabilities. Despite the progress made, much needed to be done in order to change attitudes and to provide the disabled with essential services that would improve their lives.

77. The ageing of populations was a critical problem facing national health systems, and specific health policies and programmes were required to enable the elderly to maintain their quality of life. The 2003 National Plan of Action for Older Persons Welfare Guidelines served as a guide for implementing the Madrid Plan of Action. In addition, the Government continued to vigorously promote the concept of active ageing as a way of sharing the social burden linked to the increasing number of elderly people in society, and it was exploring the creation of a multigenerational workforce.

78. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that there had never been so much wealth in the world while at the same time so many people lived in poverty. Most of the marginalized lived in developing countries where it was all the more challenging to achieve the MDGs. The “Arab spring”

had shown that it was not enough to invest in economic growth; it had highlighted the multidimensional nature of poverty and its close links to discrimination, social exclusion and a lack of fundamental civil and political rights. In order to make progress, international actors need to recognize their shared and collective responsibility for human development.

79. The revolution in Tunisia had laid bare some painful realities such as corruption and unemployment, but it had also shown the Tunisian people’s high level of political and social awareness and their aspiration for well being and social equity. The Government had developed an ambitious social programme based on the principles of equality of opportunity, social inclusion and solidarity between groups and regions and protection of human rights. Practical measures had included regularizing the status of workers, improving salaries and providing access to microcredit.

80. The Government had nevertheless encountered a number of social and economic obstacles to achieving the transition to democracy and realizing the objectives of the revolution to preserve the dignity of the individual and establish social justice. The country would be grateful for the assistance of its partners in order to provide its young people with the promise of a better future.

81. Unemployment continued: approximately one in three workers in the world was either unemployed or living below the poverty line. The challenge of providing full employment and decent work was the responsibility of States and should be made a priority in their social and economic development policies. Tangible results would be achieved, however, only if national efforts were supplemented by assistance from international actors in order to find appropriate solutions to a problem that was a threat to the future of young people.

82. **Mr. Beleffi** (San Marino) said that the consequences of the financial crisis were still evident. Economic growth had slowed or stagnated, some developed countries were still in recession, and unemployment had reached high levels, particularly among young people and women. The crisis had had a profound impact on social development, and the prospects for reducing poverty, hunger and social exclusion had been undermined. His country reaffirmed its commitment to eradicating poverty, promoting decent work and fostering social integration.

83. San Marino had always been active in the promotion of social integration and the protection of human rights, in particular for vulnerable groups. It had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and legislation had been passed guaranteeing their right to education, work, and social assistance and health care.

84. Women continued to be subject to discrimination, violence and humiliating practices. They were the most affected by HIV/AIDS. Maternal mortality was worryingly high in many of the poorest countries. It was the responsibility of the State to improve the condition of women, guarantee their access to education and promote their participation in political, social and economic life. In that regard, he welcomed the proposal to hold a global conference on women's issues 20 years after the 1995 Fourth World Conference held in Beijing.

85. San Marino had always encouraged the elderly to play an active role within their families and the wider social environment. In 2008, it had introduced a charter on older people's rights that aimed to integrate the elderly in society, recognizing the importance of their experience, knowledge and culture. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing" (A/67/188) and supported its recommendations. Lastly, San Marino recognized the essential role of the United Nations in promoting social development and would continue to support all initiatives to achieve that goal.

86. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) said that some 75 per cent of the world's population did not receive adequate social protection. Furthermore, growing inequality as a result of insufficient job creation, low agricultural productivity and climate change continued to pose challenges to governments in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Nevertheless it was satisfying to note, in the context of the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, that many States had taken measures to combat poverty in families and social exclusion.

87. The convening of the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development in 2013 was also to be welcomed. Burkina Faso accorded particular importance to the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. Since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,

the Government had introduced legislation that removed many of the barriers to social inclusion and promoted disabled persons' rights in respect of health, education, vocational training, employment and transportation. The Government had adopted a strategy for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, and a national council had been set up to further that aim.

88. For many young people who had achieved qualifications, finding decent work remained an aspiration in an international context of economic, financial and unemployment crises. Mindful of their problems, Burkina Faso organized a national forum each year that provided an opportunity for young people to engage with political leaders at the highest level, ensuring that their views were taken into account and that they were included in the development process. The Government provided financing to support self-employment and job creation for young people, and youth were included in many of the country's development programmes. Lastly, Burkina Faso thanked its development partners for their continued financial support, without which it would not be possible to protect the rights of the disabled and empower young people.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.