



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
7 November 2013

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 17th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 18 October 2013, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Tafrov..... (Bulgaria)

Contents

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

- (a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)
- (b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

13-52060 (E)



Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children ([A/68/257](#), [A/68/263](#), [A/68/253](#), [A/68/267](#), [A/68/274](#), [A/68/275](#) and [A/68/487](#)) (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children ([A/68/269](#)) (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Gana** (Nigeria) said that his country's laws and policies on the promotion and protection of the rights of children reflected its commitment to the relevant international instruments; his Government was determined to create an enabling environment to provide children with equal opportunities, protect their rights and facilitate their full participation in society. A national child policy had been approved and a national priority agenda for vulnerable children had been developed; in addition, Nigeria was working with development partners to provide quality services to orphans and vulnerable children in seven thematic areas. Through a revised 2008 national policy on education, it was focusing on inclusive education and improved access for special needs children. His Government had also implemented a number of strategies guaranteeing nine years' free compulsory education, and providing for adult literacy, non-formal education, skills acquisition and education for vulnerable groups such as nomads and migrants, women and girls, street children and the disabled.

2. Nigeria was reviewing its various laws on inter-country adoption with a view to complying with the Hague Convention and had established family courts to deal with cases involving children. Furthermore, his Government had adopted an integrated maternal infant and child health strategy to reduce childhood morbidity and maternal mortality. Strong partnerships among relevant Government agencies had done much to raise awareness among policymakers, religious and community leaders with regard to the importance of collaboration among all stakeholders.

3. Nigeria was committed to addressing the challenges of violence and other forms of exploitation of children. It had ratified the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was working relentlessly to fight the scourge of trafficking in children within and across its borders. To that end, it

had established a national agency for the prohibition of trafficking in persons. It had also signed an agreement with the International Labour Organization and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour to set up rehabilitation centres for trafficked children. Furthermore, in line with its dual approach to human trafficking, combining law enforcement with prevention and protection, it had recently adopted a child labour policy to protect children from abuse in the workplace and from all forms of labour that impeded their development.

4. **Ms. Mørch Smith** (Norway) said that it was the duty of every State to work towards the elimination of harmful practices by explicitly promoting and protecting children's rights, not only as a moral imperative but also as sound macroeconomic policy. While the advancement of children's rights had been impeded by instability in the world economy and austerity measures, early intervention to help disadvantaged children was effective and economically profitable as it would reduce the costs of school abandonment and increase the gross national income. Analyses indicated that in Norway each child who dropped out of the educational system would cost the equivalent of some \$2 million. The issue of educational inequalities should be dealt with globally as a matter of urgency.

5. In connection with the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children ([A/68/274](#)), she stressed that child trafficking, child labour and other violations of children's rights severely damaged their mental and physical health. The most urgent issue in the context of violence against children was their extreme vulnerability in armed conflicts. It was time to act on the serious violations of the rights of children in the Syrian Arab Republic: since the start of the conflict, thousands of children had died, approximately 1 million children had fled the country and a further 2 million had been internally displaced. Norway commended the efforts of the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict to improve the situation and reiterated its strong support for her mandate.

6. Children and adolescents with disabilities were among the most vulnerable people in the world; girls with disabilities often experienced double discrimination. They were at higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence and were often the

last to be reached by relief efforts. It was therefore vital to include persons with disabilities in the post-2015 development agenda. It was also imperative to move from a charity-based approach to child protection towards a rights-based approach with a strong emphasis on prevention and on empowering children, who should be recognized as a resource and included in decision-making.

7. **Mr. Lasso Mendoza** (Ecuador) said that his country accorded priority to the rights of children, whose interests must be paramount. In line with the 2008 Constitution, which enshrined the role of the State, society and the family in ensuring children's comprehensive development and full enjoyment of their rights, his Government was implementing coherent intersectoral policies, and had achieved significant results in health and education. It had set a target of eradicating chronic child malnutrition by 2017. A national strategy for early childhood was being implemented with a gender and intercultural focus to ensure high quality and accessible services and promote shared responsibility. Furthermore, since 2007, his Government had carried out a campaign to eradicate child labour, one of the more harmful repercussions of neoliberalism. His Government had committed itself to addressing the needs of all children with disabilities through a number of specific programmes.

8. Efforts must be made to protect the rights of migrant children and children of migrants, who were in highly vulnerable situations. Member States, particularly developed States, could not claim to respect and fulfil children's rights if they did not respect the rights of migrant children in particular unaccompanied minors. The United Nations must encourage the inclusion of the "best interests of the child" principle, giving preference to family reunification, in national repatriation policies and programmes.

9. **Mr. Maope** (Lesotho) said that it was disheartening that, despite the near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the extent and intensity of violence against children was increasing. As a State Party to the Convention, Lesotho was continuing to strengthen relevant national laws and policies and, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), it was drafting a regulatory framework to further enhance the juvenile justice system and making efforts to

sensitize stakeholders and the general public to the provisions of the 2012 act on children's protection and welfare.

10. His Government was also working with UNICEF to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which had given rise to a sharp increase in the number of orphans and to the phenomenon of child-headed households. The new strategic plan for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV included a community mobilization programme through which 81 per cent of pregnant women living with HIV had received transmission-blocking treatment in 2011, up from 71 per cent in 2010, and over 60 per cent of HIV-positive children had had access to treatment.

11. His Government had made significant progress towards universal primary education and, despite the challenge of sustaining the increased investment required, it would soon target secondary education. In an effort to address violence against children, his Government had launched a toll-free national child helpline in 2008 to provide 24-hour counselling, support and protection, and had also set up child and gender protection units in police posts nationwide to guarantee a child-friendly, confidential reporting environment. Lesotho was deeply concerned about the surge in human trafficking and the particular vulnerability of children, especially girls, and called on the international community to make every effort to eliminate that scourge.

12. **Mr. Al Falah** (Kuwait) said that the international community had an obligation to strengthen child protection mechanisms and redouble efforts to lessen the impact of conflicts on children, in addition to undertaking a political commitment to apply international and domestic legislation on the protection of children during armed conflicts. Kuwait had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and to its first two optional protocols in 2004 and had integrated them into national legislation. Several national child protection mechanisms and civil society associations on children's rights had been established.

13. The Kuwaiti Constitution upheld the family as the cornerstone of society and enshrined the rights to education and health care. All levels of education were fully funded by the State. Public health measures targeted the prevention and treatment of contagious diseases and included comprehensive vaccination programmes that spanned a child's life from the

prenatal period through secondary school age. In order to address the needs of children with disabilities, Kuwait would be hosting the Fourth World Autism Congress in 2014, organized by the World Autism Organization in cooperation with the Kuwait Centre for Autism.

14. He expressed grave concern about the situation of Syrian children, who were being subjected to violence at home and were experiencing social, economic and psychological conditions that were especially difficult for children to cope with abroad. Recalling the suffering of Palestinian children in the occupied territories and the violations committed by the Israeli occupation forces, he urged the international community and the relevant organizations to spare no effort in resolving both situations in order to allow those children to resume normal lives.

15. **Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) said that, in the years since it had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols, his country had worked to harmonize its domestic law with the provisions of the Convention, culminating in the enactment of its 2010 child act; it had also ratified International Labour Organization Conventions No. 138 and No. 182. Various child protection mechanisms had been established at both the federal and state levels. Community police units had been deployed to protect children from all forms of violence, and the military had set up child protection units to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers.

16. Measures to strengthen children's rights included a national strategy to combat violence against women and girls, a new 10-year plan on the rights of children for the years 2013 to 2023, and a national law on combating human trafficking, especially trafficking in women and children. A number of awareness campaigns had been conducted in conjunction with United Nations agencies. Statistics showed a substantial decline in child mortality and violence against children.

17. Violence had declined significantly in the Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states as a result of his Government's cooperation with the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur and its joint efforts with Chad, the Central African Republic and Libya to secure their common borders. His delegation called on the United Nations to place pressure on the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North to cooperate with

his Government in order to ensure that the latter's forthcoming polio vaccination campaign, planned for areas controlled by the Movement, was a success. The cooperation agreements concluded with South Sudan were expected to have a positive impact on the lives of citizens, especially children. While his Government's legislation prohibited the recruitment of child soldiers under the age of 18, the rebel movements in the Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states continued to forcibly recruit minor children. In addition to agreeing to end recruitment of child soldiers; the rebel movements must also be forced to consent to negotiations with the concerned Governments instead of continuing to bear arms, terrorize innocents and sabotage installations.

18. His Government would continue to cooperate on the rights of children with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. His delegation reiterated the need for the reports of the Secretary-General on children to contain verified information from the relevant Governments and entities, and for that information to be shared with Governments before its inclusion in the reports, giving Governments an opportunity to give their point of view, which would lend the reports added credibility. His delegation also called for the debt of developing countries to be forgiven and for the unilateral economic sanctions against some of them to be lifted, along with restrictions on exports, in order for those countries to meet their relevant obligations. Lastly, it was necessary to assist countries emerging from conflicts with efforts to rebuild.

19. **Ms. Vadiati** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, her country was committed to further promoting and protecting the rights and dignity of children in accordance with the teachings of Islam and the provisions of the Iranian Constitution. To that end, her Government complied with its reporting obligations under the Convention and had established a national focal point for the implementation of the Convention along with four working groups in the fields of monitoring and evaluation, training, protection, and legal and judicial issues, and a complementary mechanism for the prevention of violence against children.

20. In order to protect the legal and judicial rights of children, juvenile courts were required to hold closed, individual hearings in the presence of parents, legal

guardians or lawyers and juvenile offenders could not be imprisoned. Juvenile arbitration councils had been established to guarantee the rights of children in the courts. All forms of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment and solitary confinement were prohibited and a special working group had been set up in the judiciary to follow up on the prohibition of capital punishment of children and juveniles.

21. Despite the many efforts made to improve the welfare of children, there were still myriad challenges in the world, including armed conflict and foreign occupation, the global financial crisis, extraterritorial sanctions and unilateral coercive measures, abuse of children in cyberspace, poverty, discrimination and violence. The effects of those challenges were further compounded by cuts to health care, education and other programmes that benefited children. The rights and welfare of children should be placed at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda. Iran called on the Secretary-General and the relevant United Nations bodies, including UNICEF, to conduct a thorough study on the impact of extraterritorial sanctions and unilateral coercive measures on the rights of children and to present that study to the General Assembly at its next session.

22. **Ms. Davila** (Colombia) said that her country was committed to promoting and protecting the rights of children. It was a party to the relevant international instruments and, in line with the Rome Statute, it had criminalized the recruitment of minors for armed conflict under article 162 of its criminal code. Her Government was determined to improve the living conditions of all Colombian children, focusing, inter alia, on reducing inequalities faced by children, adolescents and teenage mothers, preventing violence against and exploitation of children, strengthening the gender approach and identifying geographical areas where children were at increased risk. Together with UNICEF, it had recently identified three priority areas for action under the national development plan: equality of opportunities, peacebuilding, and strengthening cross-cutting policies.

23. Various initiatives had been undertaken in a number of strategic areas to improve children's access to education, health care, quality nutrition and sanitation. Free primary education had been established in 2011, and free secondary education in 2012, benefitting some 8.5 million children. Dropout rates had fallen drastically since 2005 and the net enrolment

rate was 90 per cent, with gender parity at all levels. Assistance to displaced and vulnerable children had increased substantially since 2007, particularly through flexible education programmes for children between 6 and 17 years of age and school feeding programmes offered in many towns across the country. Furthermore, through a comprehensive strategy, a number of food assistance programmes and networks benefited millions of families in need.

24. Despite her Government's constant efforts to keep children away from conflict, illegal armed groups forcibly recruited children. Her Government had therefore taken firm action to prevent and prosecute such acts and provide redress for victims. Since 1999, the Colombian family welfare institute had assisted more than 5,000 children rescued from illegal armed groups. The intersect oral commission for the prevention of recruitment and the use of children in hostilities, established in 2007 and comprising 23 national child protection agencies, implemented concrete preventive and protective actions in high-risk towns and cities. In 2012, its mandate had been expanded to include sexual violence. Legislation in place also protected child victims of violence by guaranteeing the right to property restitution for orphans under the age of 18

25. **Ms. Astiasarán Arias** (Cuba) said that recent UNICEF data showed that one in six children in developing countries was forced to work, usually for low salaries and with no protection, in such sectors as mining and agriculture. Worldwide, 20,000 children died every day, one in three of them from malnutrition. Thousands of children were victims of organ trafficking, pornography and child prostitution and sexual exploitation. Much more needed to be done to reduce the under-five mortality rate and improve school enrolment.

26. Her Government had been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1991, but policies and programmes to benefit children had been carried out ever since the 1959 revolution. The structural injustices inherited from the colonial and neo-colonial era had been eradicated and the promotion and protection of the rights of the child were a top priority. Her Government's free national health and education systems were essential to upholding those rights, and, in 2012, 52 per cent of the State budget had been allocated to health, education and social services. The infant mortality rate had fallen sharply, mothers

and children received priority care, primary care was incorporated into the hospital infrastructure, infants were vaccinated against 13 communicable diseases and early detection was available for congenital illnesses. Special needs education coverage was 100 per cent.

27. Her Government had exceeded the objectives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Education for All programme and had achieved MDGs 3 and 4 despite the blockade imposed by the United States of America, to which the international community demanded an end every year through the General Assembly. Losses to the public health system in 2012 were conservatively estimated at some \$39 million and hospitals faced obstacles in purchasing supplies, medicines and medical equipment., including nitric oxide produced in the United States and Europe that was needed to treat a number of child respiratory illnesses. Member States should once again reject that policy by an overwhelming majority during consideration of the draft resolution on the embargo. Until policies of international cooperation and solidarity were applied, and as long as a few became rich while millions suffered from poverty, the future of humanity would remain under threat.

28. **Ms. Hernando** (Philippines) said that efforts needed to be redoubled to break the cycle of chronic poverty, which had negative repercussions on the promotion and protection of children's rights, particularly in developing countries, and to further enhance investment in more inclusive social services and ensure greater access to those services for vulnerable groups. In that regard, the Philippines had implemented a number of national initiatives and programmes, including an expanded immunization programme, which provided free vaccinations to protect infants and children from common preventable diseases, a cash transfer programme for poor households to keep children in school, and a school-to-work bridging programme to help poor but deserving young people earn an income while studying.

29. The Philippines had comprehensive legislation on children's rights that complemented existing international conventions to which it was a party, including the family code, the child and youth welfare code, and the juvenile justice and welfare act, which raised the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 9 to 15 years. Other important laws were concerned with newborn screening, the prevention of trafficking

in persons, the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and the protection of children against child abuse, exploitation and discrimination, including specific provisions to penalize perpetrators of sexual abuse, prohibit the use of children in armed combat and ensure the protection and evacuation of children during armed conflict.

30. Policy coherence at all levels was crucial to ensure sustained and timely investment in children. Special attention must continue to be given to the promotion and protection of children's rights in the post-2015 development framework, addressing, first and foremost, poverty, and meeting children's basic needs. The issue of children and armed conflict required concerted and coherent action by all stakeholders and strong political will. While Governments had a duty to protect children and their rights, all parties concerned were accountable. In that regard, her delegation reiterated its longstanding position that involving non-State armed groups, including for the purpose of securing the protection of children, should be approached in a very careful manner; any strategy to protect children must be in harmony with wider peace processes.

31. **Mr. Belhaj** (Morocco) said that armed conflicts and humanitarian crises had grave consequences for children. It was not enough to denounce and punish violence and atrocities perpetrated against children; concrete strategies and measures were needed. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the United Nations to integrate children's rights in national strategies and programmes by strengthening local capacity and creating partnerships with all actors concerned.

32. Since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993, Morocco had adopted several laws and amended legislation to bring it in line with the Convention: the age of criminal responsibility had been raised to 18 years, children's courts had been set up, an act on abandoned children had been introduced, and it had been made illegal for children under age 15 to work. Several bodies had been established to represent and protect children, including the national congress on the rights of the child, the children's parliament and the national children's rights observatory; and a 2006-2015 national childhood action plan was being implemented.

33. His Government had introduced an annual literacy strategy, the aim of which was to reduce the school dropout rate to zero by 2015, and measures had

been taken for children with disabilities to receive vocational training and to be mainstreamed in the national education system. It had ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and had actively supported the adoption of the Marrakesh Declaration in March 2012. It was on track to achieve the target of reducing the infant mortality rate by two thirds by 2015. Health care had been improved, and equal access ensured, especially for the very poor, through a medical assistance scheme which provided free health care to 28 per cent of the population, particularly women and children. Special attention was being paid to violence against children under the national plan of action for 2006-2015. Psychological and medical support units for child victims of violence had been set up at law courts and hospitals.

34. **Ms. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that although international humanitarian and human rights law governing the protection and promotion of children's rights applied to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, it was being blatantly violated by Israel, the occupying Power. Generations of Palestinian children had grown up under a brutal military occupation that had continued for more than four decades and had robbed them of their most basic and inalienable rights, with far-reaching negative consequences on their development and on society. Although Israel was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Palestinian children were being deprived of their rights under the Convention; they lacked access to health care and education and were experiencing widespread insecurity, in addition to racism, humiliation and discrimination inflicted daily by Israeli settlers and occupying forces. In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the physical challenges to the right to education included the illegally built Wall dividing villages and properties and intimidation and harassment, and sometimes physical harm, at checkpoints. Children suffered extreme psychological pressure as they witnessed incursions by occupying forces into Palestinian cities and the demolition of homes and sometimes were even used as human shields by Israeli forces. In the occupied Gaza Strip the reality on the ground was intolerable and inhumane; the blockade had resulted in horrific living conditions and caused a devastating humanitarian crisis.

35. She drew attention to the situation of Palestinian children who continued to be illegally held and mistreated in Israeli detention centres and prisons, in direct violation of United Nations conventions. Traumatized by forcible removal from their homes and by interrogation and placement in adult detention facilities, they endured physical and psychological abuse and were forced to sign confessions in a language they did not understand. Her delegation demanded that Israel cease those illegal practices. Putting an end to Israel's occupation and the culture of impunity was the first step towards ensuring that Palestinian children enjoyed their inalienable human rights. More robust assistance from the international community was needed to guarantee the rights of Palestinian children and provide them with the tools to contribute to the advancement of their own viable and independent State.

36. **Mr. Krishnasswamy** (India) said that the Indian Constitution had several provisions for the protection, development and welfare of children. A national charter for children had been adopted in 2004 and a detailed plan of action had been drawn up in 2005. Under a flagship programme for integrated child development, 78 million children under the age of 6 were receiving services in the areas of nutrition, health and education, including immunizations, regular check-ups and referral services, and pre-school education was being provided to for 37 million children; there were also other programmes targeting integrated management of neonatal and childhood illnesses, sanitation and reproductive and child health. His Government had achieved a significant decline in infant mortality rates. It was noteworthy that India manufactured 40 per cent of vaccines used in universal immunization programmes worldwide.

37. The Constitution provided for free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14; the enactment of an education act in 2009 had given momentum to efforts to address issues of equity and access to education. Under a public-private partnership, private schools reserved 25 per cent of their places for children from lower income families, with budgetary support from the State. With close to universal enrolment in primary education, particularly as a result of actions aimed at the girl child, the current focus was on the expansion of secondary education and its accessibility to girls, and skills development for improved employability. His Government had also

undertaken legislative and policy measures to ban sex-selective abortion and child marriage.

38. Eradicating child labour was a priority for his Government, which strictly enforced the ban on the employment of children under the age of 14. In 2009, to strengthen implementation of the juvenile justice (care and protection of children) act, it had launched an integrated child protection scheme to cover offences not addressed in the law and to enhance the safety net. Furthermore, the protection of children from sexual offences act had entered into force in November 2012 and there was a comprehensive legislative and policy framework to address the problem of trafficking in women and children. India would be hosting the second high-level meeting on South-South cooperation for child rights in Asia and the Pacific from 23-25 October 2013.

39. **Ms. Afara** (Yemen) said that her country had been among the first to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols and was working to implement them by fulfilling its reporting obligations and enacting and revising domestic child protection laws. Institutional mechanisms established to implement those laws included a council on motherhood and childhood and a technical commission to combat child smuggling. Her Government was also cooperating with international organizations to protect and advance the rights of children, as evinced by a number of successes attained despite its limited resources and difficult circumstances. In cooperation with UNICEF, a national observatory for violations of the rights of children had been established and a plan had been drafted on prohibiting the recruitment of children into the armed forces and securing the release and reintegration into society of those already recruited. Yemen had been declared a polio-free country in 2008 and it conducted regular vaccination campaigns. A national strategy and plan of action against child trafficking had been put in place. Her delegation reiterated its commitment to promoting the rights of children, also stressing the necessity of redoubled international efforts to that end.

40. **Ms. Sinyangwe** (Zambia) said that the report of the Secretary-General had highlighted a number of situations and factors that prevented the full realization of children's rights; it was therefore imperative for Member States, individually and collectively, to continue to engage in concerted efforts to improve the situation of children and their welfare. To fulfil its

obligation to create an environment in which the child was protected, her Government continued to ensure universal access to education and had worked tirelessly with partners to improve school enrolment rates and attain gender parity in schools. It urged the international community to build on the gains of the MDGs in the post-2015 development agenda by setting qualitative standards in the education sector. In view of the importance of mainstreaming disability in policies and programmes for children's rights, her Government had enacted legislation to ensure that all children with disabilities enjoyed their human rights and other fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.

41. A number of harmful traditional and cultural practices, including child labour, female genital mutilation and early marriage, continued to endanger the lives of children. Her Government had therefore launched a robust campaign involving all stakeholders, including traditional leaders, to eradicate the scourge of early and child marriages, which were prevalent in Zambia, and promote a re-entry policy that allowed girls who had given birth to continue their education. Zambia looked forward to the inclusion of children's rights in all spheres of sustainable development within the post-2015 development agenda and called for greater international cooperation and partnerships.

42. **Mr. Ntwaagae** (Botswana) said that despite the steady progress made with regard to violence against children and children in armed conflict, including efforts to end impunity and the recruitment of child soldiers, violence continued to impede the effective attainment of children's rights. Botswana remained gravely concerned about the impact of armed conflict and the use of heavy weapons on millions of children, who were affected not only as bystanders, but also as targets. His delegation shared the view that the protection of children remained the primary responsibility of States; it therefore reiterated its support for the strengthening of child protection systems, children's access to justice systems, the strengthening of national capacities as well as accountability for violations of children's rights.

43. His country had achieved significant progress in protecting children's rights: the legislative and policy framework had been improved over the years, particularly with the passage of a children's act in 2009; sustained progress had been made in the provision of access to education and in the quality of basic learning; the early childhood development policy

continued to be implemented; and programmes ensuring the protection, survival and development of children were also in place. Furthermore, Botswana had invested substantially in the general health infrastructure and access to health care and the coverage of maternal and child health interventions, including prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV, had increased over the years. However, HIV and AIDS still presented major challenges, and high prevalence rates rendered the achievement of the goals of reducing child mortality and improving maternal health a daunting task.

44. Botswana continued to face financial and human resource constraints in the implementation of its child protection and development programmes. Strengthening partnerships with the United Nations system and development partners, including civil society organizations and the private sector, therefore remained critical

45. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that, in a world of unprecedented economic and technical potential, existing rates of child malnutrition and starvation were unacceptable. The post-2015 development agenda must therefore include strategies which focused on children, in particular. For years, Tunisia had led the way in devoting attention to children's issues through a coherent legal framework that safeguarded the rights of children to education, health care, social and economic protection, leisure and freedom of expression. Her Government had made tremendous strides towards achieving education for all, consolidating previous gains and allocating an annual average of nearly 6 per cent of the gross domestic product to education in spite of ongoing structural adjustments and other development constraints. Post-revolutionary Tunisian education aimed to train professionals capable of contributing to national development. Priority had been given to improving the quality of instruction, attending to children with special needs and modernizing the infrastructure of rural schools. Moving forward, her Government would pay special attention to improving the situation of children in impoverished areas.

46. Tunisia sought to guarantee the civic and political rights of the young and facilitate their participation in decision-making processes. In that regard, clandestine migrant youth were most vulnerable to human rights violations, hence the urgent need for the international community and all stakeholders to put in place a concerted strategy so as to prevent that harmful trend

from advancing further. International efforts must be stepped up to redress the wrenching situation of Palestinian children, who were being deprived of their most fundamental human rights and traumatized by terror on a daily basis, in order to reaffirm their right to protection from violence, neglect and maltreatment, and their right to life and freedom.

47. **Mr. Cortorreal** (Dominican Republic) said that the Dominican Republic, a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1991, had signed a collaboration agreement with UNICEF in support of its four-year plan for 2012-2016 on accelerating the achievement of the MDGs, focusing on children and adolescents from the poorest and most marginalized communities. His Government's poverty eradication strategy provided poor families with income support and promoted the development of skills in early childhood, among other goals. A national literacy plan aimed to improve primary and secondary education and increase school enrolment rates. Moreover, a national centre for disability care was being constructed and would provide comprehensive care, education and rehabilitation for children up to 10 years of age with various disabilities.

48. With regard to violence against children, the Dominican Republic had enacted a code for the protection of the fundamental rights of children and adolescents and had established a national protection system. His Government fully supported the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and endorsed the need to allocate the necessary resources for her activities; it had hosted the Central America meeting on the follow-up to the study on violence against children in December 2011. The Dominican Republic faced challenges in the protection of children's rights, especially with regard to the necessary financial resources, but reaffirmed its commitment to that endeavour.

49. **Ms. Zografiska-Krsteska** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the priority of her country's national action plan for children's rights for the period 2006-2015 was to fully integrate the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic policies and activities in order to reduce inequalities and protect children from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. The recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child had been taken on board and the plan revised accordingly to better reflect realities on the ground and thereby

provide a better response to existing challenges. Education was open to all without discrimination, and secondary education had been compulsory and free of charge since a 2007 amendment of the law on secondary education.

50. Under a programme of cooperation for the period 2010-2015, her Government collaborated with UNICEF on improving data collection systems in the areas of social work and justice for children, and had developed new monitoring mechanisms and a database on vulnerable children. More improvements were needed for the systematic collection and analysis of data on children with disabilities, who were the most vulnerable group, in greatest need of social inclusion and integration into the educational system.

51. A recently adopted law on child protection aimed to protect children against all forms of discrimination, whether direct or indirect, the illegal use or abuse of narcotics, psychotropic substances and precursors, involvement in armed conflicts and abuse for political or religious activities. A law on juvenile justice had been enacted in 2007 to reform juvenile legislation in her country, based on the principles of the protection of the minor and his or her rights, socialization and assistance, restorative justice and prevention of juvenile delinquency. Her Government's policy on preventing and dealing with the sexual abuse of children and paedophilia had been set forth in an action plan providing for a coordinated system of cooperation among government agencies and the civil sector; it had been supplemented by a 2012 law on the registration of persons convicted of sexual abuse of minors and paedophilia.

52. Her Government had ratified the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse in 2012 and was in the process of ratifying the third optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She stressed that the participation of children themselves was crucial in creating a world fit for children — a task that would require a great deal more work on the part of all actors, as the story of Malala Yousafzai had demonstrated.

53. **Mr. Chipaziwa** (Zimbabwe) said that his Government remained actively involved in efforts to improve the well-being of children at national, regional and international levels. Zimbabwe's national child survival strategy for 2010-2015 brought together all stakeholders under a common framework; his

Government had also put in place a sizable social protection mechanism, as part of the second phase of its national action plan for orphans and vulnerable children (2011-2015), along with the support of a child protection fund. A national programme of action for children ensured coordination of all child welfare programmes and created awareness of children's rights. Moreover, a multisectoral national child welfare council was tasked with monitoring child rights, with an emphasis on children in difficult circumstances, including orphans and children in child-led households. A support unit for survivors of sexual violence and abuse was staffed with personnel specifically trained to handle vulnerable witnesses. Guidelines which were currently being developed for juvenile offenders would provide the basis for a law on juvenile justice.

54. Zimbabwe had acceded to the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; it reiterated the need to expand research and action into the demand side of trafficking and other forms of economic and sexual exploitation of children. His Government was deeply concerned about the phenomenon of child-headed households, a trend which was on the rise in the wake of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and was providing cash transfers and other forms of social protection to children in such situations. However, much more remained to be done in order both to assist such children and to address the root causes of the phenomenon.

55. **Mr. Grima** (Malta) said that measures taken by his Government to provide greater protection to children included the establishment of a national commission for child policy and strategy in June 2013. The commission would be tasked with developing a child-rights-based strategy and drafting a children's act to protect the rights and interests of children, following consultation with children themselves; it was also drafting or amending legislation to address all aspects of children's rights, including adoption and foster care. In addition, the role of the commissioner for children was being strengthened.

56. Through various initiatives including the voluntary regulation of the sector and the training of carers, child care facilities and standards were being improved in order to ensure accessibility to quality child care for all. Pre-kindergarten education was provided free of charge to all children, and an after-school service for school-age children 3 to 16 years of age offered by the Ministry of Education and

Employment provided children with further opportunities to develop social, emotional and learning skills, while also improving the working conditions of working parents.

57. Recognizing the long-term economic benefits of social investment in child well-being, Malta was working to address child poverty using an approach based on prevention and early intervention, which were key to combating the intergenerational cycle of poverty and social exclusion. Recent measures undertaken included increases in children's allowances for families and in cost-of-living allowances for means-tested benefits in order to assist vulnerable households. Moreover, as of 2013, maternity leave had been increased from 16 to 18 weeks.

58. His country's national commission for the promotion of equality worked to raise children's awareness and empower them on issues related to equality, discrimination and stereotypes. The Ministry of Education and Employment was also striving to improve service delivery, particularly for the disadvantaged, and promote equal opportunities by fostering an inclusive education approach for students in need of learning support.

59. **Mr. Mnisi** (Swaziland) said that Swaziland was party to a number of regional, subregional and international instruments for the promotion and protection of children's rights. In September 2012 it had acceded to the first two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and it had enacted a children's protection and welfare law shortly thereafter. His Government had established a national children's coordination unit in the Deputy Prime Minister's Office to ensure coordination among government departments and with civil society actors. Its national children's policy, formulated in 2009, included a focus on the girl child. Under the Constitution, free primary education was available for all children in public schools; however, the implementation of that provision was an ongoing process. Her Government continued to meet the education costs of orphans and vulnerable children and was collaborating with communities to ensure that the assistance provided benefited those who were in need.

60. Her Government reaffirmed that the family was the natural and fundamental core component of society. It recognized, however, that, decimated by HIV/AIDS, the traditional extended family could no longer be

counted on to care for orphaned children; it was working with traditional chiefs, religious institutions, communities and civil society to ensure that the rights of such children were protected. By providing prevention of mother-to-child transmission services to Swazi women, Swaziland had succeeded in reducing the number of infants who contracted HIV from their mothers. He expressed deep concern regarding the vulnerability of children, especially girls, to sexual exploitation, slavery, prostitution, pornography and acts of paedophilia, which were being exacerbated by the Internet.

61. **Mr. Logar** (Slovenia), speaking also on behalf of Austria and Croatia, called for the universal ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols and stressed the need for enhanced coordination among United Nations entities in the field of child protection and cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. Although the international community was committed to their protection, children continued to suffer from poverty, armed conflict, natural and man-made disasters, discrimination and violence, including sexual violence and abuse. Noting with concern the alarming reports of child rights abuses in the Syrian Arab Republic, Mali and the Central African Republic, he stressed the importance of protecting children from violence, including in armed conflicts, and of ensuring their basic human security. All United Nations actors in the field must remain committed to the protection of children.

62. Austria, Croatia and Slovenia pledged to continue focusing on guaranteeing children's right to education, including human rights education, as a fundamental element in determining both their future and their present, as well as in achieving sustainable development. Furthermore, equal opportunities for girls and boys must be ensured; the fulfilment of girls' right to education was a moral imperative. In that regard, they welcomed the theme of the second Day of the Girl Child, "Innovating for girls' education". Lastly, they would remain vigilant on such other issues as sexual discrimination and exploitation, female genital mutilation and early marriage.

63. **Ms. Mansouri** (Algeria) said that children from poor families continued to suffer from the consequences of the global economic crisis, in particular as a result of high food prices. African children were the hardest hit by malnutrition,

pandemics, illiteracy, poverty and armed conflict. Yet Africa could not face those challenges alone and it often lacked the necessary resources. The support of the international community was therefore essential.

64. At the national level, as a party to the principal international children's rights instruments, Algeria had harmonized its national legislation and was implementing a national strategy on the family, a national plan for child protection and, in collaboration with UNICEF, a national strategy to combat violence against children. It had amended the nationality code to allow transmission of nationality through the mother.

65. Algeria was combating child labour and child prostitution, trafficking, especially of girls, and the use of the Internet for the transmission of pornography. Its penal code set tough penalties for the abandonment, sexual abuse, rape or prostitution of children. Its investment in infrastructure, as well as in vaccination, disease prevention and birth control programmes, had cut infant mortality by almost one third between 2005 and 2012, and it was determined to achieve a further significant reduction. As a result of its investment in education and its commitment to the provision of free and compulsory education, the 2012-2013 school attendance rate of 98 per cent was on a par with that of some developed countries. Specific measures in the areas of transport, school meals, school textbook subsidies and increased school allowances paid to low income families had contributed to that achievement.

66. **Mr. von Haff** (Angola) said that child poverty remained one of the biggest obstacles to the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. Angola had intensified efforts to include children's rights and needs in its national development plans and policies. Nevertheless, those plans and programmes needed adequate resource commitments and consistent funding if they were to improve outcomes relating to children's rights and better integrate children's rights indicators into national planning and monitoring processes. The progress made by his Government on the issue of child labour as a means of achieving MDG 1 on poverty eradication was worthy of note.

67. A national committee on children had been established and a national plan of action on combating sexual exploitation and trafficking of children had been adopted. However, persistent structural and social constraints impaired the full development of children. His Government had undertaken commitments with

regard to children in the areas of health, education, juvenile justice, and prevention and mitigation of violence against children, among others. An integrated programme to tackle child malnutrition, implemented in cooperation with UNICEF and non-governmental organizations, had benefited over 250,000 children. Other benefits of his Government's partnership with UNICEF included a significant drop in child mortality rates, halting of the transmission of the polio virus, and improved access to primary education. Angola was investing heavily in early childhood development programmes and the training of teachers and social workers. Lastly, his Government, had adopted a decree on free birth registration.

68. **Ms. Vangansuren** (Mongolia) said that her Government had recently signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure, allowing Mongolian children to submit complaints regarding violations of their rights to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It had adopted a series of laws, strategies and programmes and had established a special fund to support the implementation of programmes benefiting children.

69. Family and children's affairs units were operating in central and local government entities, and a number of child protection and welfare-related projects were being implemented by United Nations and other international organizations. UNICEF had led the formation of a group that acted as a high-level observer of child rights in Mongolia while advocating for the effective implementation of policies and for budget allocations to benefit children.

70. In Mongolia, where children made up over 37 per cent of the population, one in three children lived in poverty, which was exacerbated by social disparity, unemployment and migration from rural to urban areas. Children with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups were hit even harder. Against that backdrop, her Government had been working to improve children's access to education and health services. With primary school enrolment currently at 92.9 per cent, measures to achieve universal primary education enrolment by 2015 included the organization of a school lunch programme to attract enrolment. Comprehensive efforts to prevent common childhood diseases had resulted in a significant reduction in child mortality rates, though more progress needed to be made in order to reach the target for 2015.

71. Her Government was deeply concerned that the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016 might not be achieved. States should make increased efforts to reach a universally acceptable definition of child labour and hard labour must be eliminated. As a party to the Palermo Protocol, her Government gave high priority to the protection of women's and children's rights. More must be done to improve post-adoption supervision in inter-country adoptions, provide alternative care for orphans and abandoned children, educate girls in reproductive health and end domestic violence. The media and civil society played a significant role in the promotion of the rights of the child; the active participation of children in decisions affecting them should be encouraged.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.