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Chair: Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria)
later: Ms. Dagher (Vice-Chair) (Lebanon)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (A/68/121)
(continued)

(a) **Advancement of women** (A/68/38, A/68/178, A/68/179, A/68/184, A/68/340, A/68/487 and E/2013/27-E/CN.6/2013/11) (continued)

(b) **Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly** (A/68/175) (continued)

1. **Ms. Sumi** (Japan) said that her Government was boosting its international efforts on behalf of women. Over the next three years, it planned to increase its contribution for the advancement of women through official development assistance, and it had donated to the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women in response to violence against women in Libya. In addition to ongoing efforts to develop an action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), it had implemented measures to prevent sexual violence in conflict and assist victims in several countries and was cooperating closely in that connection with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the International Criminal Court and the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. At the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Japanese delegation had submitted a resolution based on her country's experience with the empowerment of women during the 2011 earthquake, and it would be submitting a resolution on natural disasters and gender at the fifty-eighth session.

2. At the national level, as a member of the Equal Futures Partnership, Japan would endeavour to foster a family-friendly working environment, to provide incentives for companies that promoted women and to place women in 30 per cent of policymaking leadership positions by 2020. The Japan Revitalization Strategy emphasized promoting a work environment in which women could flourish.

3. **Mr. Viinanen** (Finland) stressed the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the General Recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Convention's Optional Protocol. Women needed equal access to justice, decent work, education and health care.

Impunity for violations of their human right must stop. Furthermore, more countries should adopt action plans under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Finland had pledged to double its contribution to the core funding of UN-Women in 2014, and he urged other Governments to follow its example. In keeping with a human rights-based approach to development, particular attention should be paid to gender equality and the rights of women and girls in the post-2015 development agenda.

4. **Mr. McLay** (New Zealand) said that his Government had consistently supported the treaties, resolutions and outcome documents promoting gender equality. Given the fundamental need for inclusiveness in a healthy democracy, it agreed with the Secretary-General on the need for additional, more comparable data on women's political participation. It conscientiously re-evaluated national policies and laws on eliminating violence against women for effectiveness and was concerned about the many intersecting forms of discrimination against women, particularly indigenous women and women with disabilities. He urged Member States to remain keenly focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals on women and to make gender equality a goal of the post-2015 development agenda.

5. New Zealand was developing a national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and was working with its regional partners to implement the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. It welcomed recent measures within the United Nations system to take more account of women's needs in emergency situations and called for accelerating efforts to include and empower women in decisions on humanitarian action and disaster relief.

6. **Ms. Abdullah** (Iraq) said that despite her Government's tangible progress towards achieving the Goal on women's empowerment through political participation, education indicators showed that greater efforts were needed. Because of such obstacles to education as violence, conflict situations and terrorism, families were reluctant to allow girls to leave the home to pursue an education. Nevertheless, Iraqi women and girls remained determined to obtain an education and had made significant progress towards gender parity at all levels of schooling.

7. Legislative reforms had enabled Iraqi women to participate constructively in State decision-making and policy formulation mechanisms. The Iraqi Constitution provided that 25 per cent of seats in the Iraqi Parliament should be held by women; they had reached 27 per cent in the 2010 Parliamentary elections. Her Government was keen on promoting the participation of Iraqi women in the forthcoming 2014 elections as both candidates and voters.

8. Iraq had taken steps to combat domestic violence, including the establishment of a commission for protection of the family in 2009 and the creation of family protection units throughout the Governorates staffed by women police and social and legal researchers. Moreover, a law against trafficking in persons had been adopted in 2012.

9. Rates of women's education in Iraqi Kurdistan had risen significantly in recent years with the introduction of compulsory primary education for both boys and girls. The Ministry for Women's Affairs had put in place an educational policy aimed at entrenching the foundations of equality and social justice by promoting women's participation in educational and public policymaking.

10. In 2003, her Government had adopted a policy of developing and increasing capacity-building of workers, aiming to maintain gender balance. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had opened technical training and professional development courses up to women workers and conducted inspection visits to assess compliance with national legislation on working women.

11. A long-range national development plan for 2010 to 2014 included women's education and advancement among its priorities, and laws that had entrenched discrimination were being amended. Older divisions of labour that had circumscribed women's activity to low-production sectors were being re-examined. Awareness-raising campaigns sought to change the image of women in the media, while education systems and curricula were being reformed to change society's views on discrimination against women and instil in individuals a sense of responsibility towards them.

12. **Ms. Cedento** (Panama) said that her Government was committed to promoting and protecting the rights of women under instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention of Belém do Pará.

Preventing violence against women was a major focus of its Public Policy on Equality of Opportunities for Women, and it was sponsoring a bill to incorporate the crime of femicide in the Penal Code. In addition, numerous community-level networks worked to combat domestic violence by developing practical plans and sharing experiences and good practice in prevention and response. Victims could receive assistance through free helplines and the Counselling and Psychosocial Support Centres, as well as at three shelters and counselling centres. However, many challenges remained, including strengthening violence prevention mechanisms, eradicating stereotypes and prejudices, training justice operators and educating a population that considered domestic violence normal.

13. **Ms. Phipps** (United States of America) said that the small percentage of women participating in politics was a matter of concern, as was the scarcity of reliable data on their participation. The Equal Futures Partnership, launched by the United States and other partners during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, encouraged members to take concrete actions to promote gender equality. The partnership, which had grown to 36 countries, enjoyed the active support of UN-Women, the World Bank and leading businesses and non-profit organizations.

14. Through a new initiative, Safe from the Start, the United States was funding the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other organizations to hire specialized staff, launch new programmes and develop innovative methods to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies. It welcomed the commitment demonstrated and actions taken to address all forms of violence against women and girls, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence in conflict and harmful traditional practices.

15. Other United States initiatives included the Women's Nationality Initiative and a global memorandum of understanding on empowering women farmers economically that had recently been signed with Walmart. In formulating objectives for the period beyond 2015, it was critical to consider gender issues, including women, peace and security.

16. **Ms. Ulziibayar** (Mongolia) said that her Government looked forward to a post-2015 development agenda that gave priority to gender

equality and women's empowerment. It was implementing national programmes to improve women's access to education, health care, employment and social protection, thereby empowering them economically and reducing their vulnerability to violence and discrimination. A 2011 gender equality law set civil service quotas of up to 40 per cent for women and prohibited discrimination in hiring, promotion, wages and access to education. Following the 2012 legislative elections, the number of women legislators had tripled, and the number of women Cabinet members had also increased. Specific actions had been taken at all levels to combat violence against women, and lessons learned were being applied in the next phase of legal reforms. To address the economic and social inequality of rural women, it would first be necessary to identify the causative factors. In that light, Mongolia welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendation to strengthen the capacity of national statistics offices to collect, analyse and disseminate sex-disaggregated data to inform policy design and strategy development in rural areas.

17. **Ms. Fahmy** (Egypt) welcomed the strong focus on ending violence against women in the report of the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, as well as the Panel's decision to make gender equality and women's empowerment a stand-alone goal. She also welcomed the leadership of UN-Women on combating violence against women and urged Member States to strengthen their own national mechanisms. Priority should be given to education and economic empowerment without neglecting the need for gender equality and social and political empowerment.

18. Egypt and UN-Women had signed the final agreement on the establishment of a United Nations regional office for the Arab States in May. Women's issues were high on the agenda of her Government, which had three women ministers and a woman presidential adviser. The Egyptian National Council for Women, which had contributed many proposals for empowering women and ensuring their political and economic participation, was well represented on the committee tasked with amending the Constitution, and a draft law addressing violence against women would be ready for consideration by the new Parliament. Egypt had endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and was committed to the implementation of the strategic plan adopted by UN-Women in September.

19. **Ms. Kozłowska-Rajewicz** (Poland), emphasizing her Government's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as its support for the United Nations bodies striving to ensure the advancement of women, stated that it objected to any interpretation of references to sexual and reproductive rights or sexual and reproductive health services in international documents as including abortion on demand. In the context of Poland's commitment to a rights-based approach to gender equality and women's empowerment, universal access to reproductive health services was a key priority of Poland's development assistance programme. Domestically, women were entitled to free, high-quality sexual and reproductive health-care services, including in vitro fertilization. Maternal, neonatal and child health care were among the primary operating objectives of the National Health Programme, and public education campaigns stressed the importance of early detection of breast and cervical cancer.

20. **Ms. Hernando** (Philippines) said that particular attention should be given to rural women, who had made less progress towards the Millennium Development Goals than men or urban women, and to women migrant workers, who were particularly subject to violence, discrimination and exploitation. It was also necessary to address the barriers to women's participation in political and decision-making processes. A gender perspective should be mainstreamed in discussions on the post-2015 development framework, and gender equality and women's empowerment should be a stand-alone goal. Her delegation supported the efforts of UN-Women to develop a new goal articulated around freedom from violence, gender equality in capabilities and resources, and voice, leadership and participation. It hoped that UN-Women and other United Nations agencies would continue to take due account of the specific needs and priorities of Member States.

21. Her Government continued to promote initiatives for the advancement of women at the bilateral, regional and international levels. Thanks to its commitment to advancing gender equity at home, Philippines had succeeded in closing the gender gap for the indicators used to build the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index. Women's rights were guaranteed

under the Constitution and Republic Act No. 9170, also known as the Magna Carta of Women.

22. *Ms. Dagher (Lebanon), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

23. **Ms. Özaydın** (Turkey) said that the time had come for the international community to empower women to assume leadership roles in peace, democratization and development. Turkey was proud to be among the 10 countries with the sharpest decline in maternal death rates between 1990 and 2008. It had actively contributed to the negotiations leading to the historical conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-seventh session and had agreed to host the UN-Women regional office for Europe and Central Asia.

24. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile) said that in its concluding observations on his country's fifth and sixth periodic reports, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had highlighted major legislative advances in the promotion and protection of women's rights. However, like most countries, Chile needed to continue working towards gender equality and women's empowerment, giving special attention to women's participation in politics and public affairs and their access to justice. Building on a 2010 law establishing the State's duties for protection, prevention and punishment with respect to domestic violence and giving the National Office of Women's Affairs broader powers, the Government had launched a new legislative agenda on domestic violence. At the same time, the scope of Chile's domestic violence programme had been widened to encompass trafficking in persons and domestic and other sexual aggression. The national plan strengthened the integration of a gender perspective in the security and armed forces and emphasized raising awareness of the international instruments on gender, security and peace in those institutions. In view of the feminization of agricultural labour, a bill had been drafted to grant farm workers benefits previously reserved for fixed contract employees, and under a law enacted in 2011, seasonal labourers who began drawing prenatal benefits would receive prenatal and postnatal benefits even after their employment ended. Government programmes for women workers and heads of household included the Women's Leadership Schools, where women in lower-level political, union or community positions could develop their leadership skills. His Government would continue working to prevent and respond to violence

against women and to modernize Chile's labour laws to include, protect and empower women. It urged Member States to make gender equality and women's empowerment an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda.

25. **Ms. Alsaleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the rights and freedoms of Syrian women had been profoundly undermined by the crisis into which her country had been plunged in 2011 by the terrorist attack. Women and girls had been stripped of their rights by the perverse Wahhabi fatwas that armed fundamentalist groups used to legitimize their crimes and ensure impunity. Those fatwas prevented women from participating in public life and justified all forms of violence against them, particularly sexual violence, psychological oppression and forced displacement within and outside Syria.

26. The most glaring instance of a fatwa affecting women was the so-called "marriage jihad" issued by some of the lunatics financed by the Qatari and Saudi regimes, among others. The fatwa provided for women to accompany terrorists into combat zones and assist them in jihad by making themselves available to the terrorists. Her delegation's report on the subject had been submitted to the Secretary-General and issued as an official document of the United Nations under the agenda item on the advancement of women ([A/68/487](#)). She advised those countries involved in the deteriorating situation in her country, in particular the Qatari regime, to read the report and to question their regime's immoral support, protection and media coverage of those trafficking in religion and fatwas that incited the killing and rape of Syrian women.

27. She reassured the Qatari regime and others supporting the takfirist armed terrorist groups that the Syrian authorities were documenting those crimes against Syrian women and that their perpetrators, including the ruling sheikhs of Qatar, would be brought to justice under Syrian law.

28. Refugee camps outside Syria were plagued by an absence of security and deteriorating living conditions, despite the host Governments' continuous pleas for the support of the international community to help bear Syria's domestic burden in that regard. Syrian girls continued to fall prey to human trafficking, rape and early marriage in exchange for exorbitant sums of money, according to international reports. Such marriages were brief and ended when the husband, who

hailed from a Gulf country, disappeared, absolved of any obligations to children resulting from the union. A serious plan of action must be adopted immediately to protect Syrians living in the camps. Host Governments had a particular responsibility to protect Syrian refugees from trafficking and to guarantee decent living conditions.

29. Syrian women and girls living under Israeli occupation in the Golan continued to be economically marginalized and subjected to sexual and other forms of violence. She called on the Secretary-General to monitor and address all Israeli violations of women's rights in the occupied Syrian Golan in his reports on the subject.

30. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that her Government attached particular importance to including gender equality in the post-2015 development agenda. In Tunisia, there could be no question of rolling back the rights of women, who had participated prominently in the revolution. The decision to promote girls' and women's right to education represented a fundamental political choice to empower women as active partners in building peace, prosperity and a balanced society.

31. While women in Tunisia accounted for more than half of new hires, analysis of the labour market showed that they were not represented in all professions and had difficulty rising to decision-making and senior management positions. In the coming period, the Government would be focusing on correcting that situation, as well as on combating violence against women, promoting a culture of women's rights, reconciling work and family duties, encouraging women's entrepreneurship and increasing women's participation in politics and public affairs.

32. **Mr. Al-Moumani** (Jordan) said that his country was moving towards a vision of women's empowerment that developed their capacities, knowledge and skills and ensured their enjoyment of a life with dignity free from discrimination and violence, thus enabling their effective participation in policy- and decision-making and their contribution to building the family and society and achieving sustainable development in a society governed by justice and equality of opportunity.

33. A national strategy on women for 2013-2017 had strengthened women's participation in all areas of decision-making and brought the number of women deputies in Parliament to 18 of 150, an all-time high

for Jordan. Women voters accounted for 48 per cent of the total electorate and 35 per cent in the municipal council elections held the previous August. Out of 928 total judges, 142 were women.

34. Jordanian efforts to achieve the Goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women had translated into a tangible improvement in female representation in the education system, which had reached 20 per cent of students in public universities. Moreover, women accounted for 14.5 per cent of the overall labour force. Out of its fundamental commitment to the advancement of women, his Government would continue to integrate women's needs and priorities into all policy areas and to develop national mechanisms to empower women politically, culturally, economically and socially.

35. **Ms. Chikava** (Zimbabwe) said that her country's Constitution enshrined the principle of equality between men and women, guaranteeing women equal representation in the Senate and among elected provincial councillors and 60 seats in the House of Assembly. The Government's gender policy focused on the economic empowerment of women, most of whom earned less than a subsistence living, through measures to provide business lines of credit, improved access to rural markets and skills training. Because most rural women had lost working-age family members to the AIDS pandemic, steps had been taken to expand social protection. The Government was committed to the full implementation of the Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa, including the allocation of 10 per cent of the national budget to agriculture. It recognized the importance of securing rural women's access to land and other means of production, as well as the need to protect women's inheritance and property rights. It would continue its efforts to harmonize discriminatory customary laws on inheritance and property with the national laws in those areas while working towards the full implementation of the national laws, which took precedence.

36. Zimbabwe had made great strides towards establishing a strong legal framework on the prevention and protection of gender-based violence. However, aggressive awareness campaigns were needed to combat the harmful gender stereotypes at the root of such violence and to involve men as agents of change. Education was important, not only for equipping women and girls with marketable skills but also for instilling a sense of self-worth. It was

unacceptable that a high percentage of victims of domestic violence believed they deserved to be beaten.

37. **Ms. Mørch Smith** (Norway) said that Member States had a collective responsibility to provide the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women with sufficient resources to carry out its mandate. While a widely acknowledged success, the Goals did not address the underlying causes of gender inequality effectively, and the post-2015 development framework should include a transformative goal on gender equality. Gender equality and women's empowerment should be both a stand-alone goal and integrated into all goals in the new development framework, together with universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

38. Every woman should have the freedom to choose whether and when to have a child. It was unacceptable that almost 50,000 women died each year from unsafe illegal abortions and that 800 women died every day from complications of pregnancy or childbirth. For every woman who died, 20 more suffered serious injury or permanent disability.

39. Violence against women and girls was a manifestation of gender discrimination. By adopting a strong set of agreed conclusions, the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women had taken a significant step towards guaranteeing the right of every woman and girl to live a life free from violence. Her delegation urged adoption of the draft resolution on protecting women human rights defenders, who were subject to discrimination, harassment and violence.

40. In closing, she encouraged support for the analysis by UN-Women of gender perspectives in the work of the General Assembly. She hoped that its assistance to Member States on gender equality perspectives would deliver sustainable results.

41. **Ms. Mansouri** (Algeria), noting the need to empower rural women and ensure their participation in decision-making at all levels, urged Member States to strengthen their rural and agricultural development policies and to integrate a gender perspective in development policies beyond 2015. She called on all countries to ensure access to justice and support for migrant women victims of violence, regardless of their immigration status. In view of the omnipresence of violence against women in general, more effort should be devoted to public education and prevention.

42. Since ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1996, with the help of civil society, the Government had increased women's participation in the development and execution of public policy and had devised and implemented programmes and action plans for the advancement of women and the prevention of violence against them. In addition, Algeria had amended its laws, most notably its Constitution, to protect and promote the rights of women. In 2012, it had enacted a law providing mechanisms for increasing women's representation in elected assemblies, which had allowed it to become 1 of 30 countries that had achieved or exceeded the objective set in the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action.

43. Its policies and programmes had produced results. Almost all girls through age 16 were in school. Women represented half of teachers and doctors, 40 per cent of the judiciary and a third of upper echelon civil service.

44. **Mr. Fiallo** (Ecuador) said that following the entry into force of the Constitution of 2008, which established equality as a basic principle of the State, the Government had implemented mechanisms to ensure respect for differences of ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, and sexual identity and orientation. Progress on women's rights had clearly been propelled by the demands of indigenous and mestizo women and women of African descent. Government policies to promote and protect women's rights were based on the recommendations of the Commission on the Status of Women as well as context-specific strategies.

45. Over the past five years, it had carried out a national plan for the eradication of gender-based violence following an intersectoral and multidisciplinary approach. Other accomplishments included a campaign to raise awareness of the connection between machismo and violence and the first national survey of family relations and gender-based violence, which had led to increased efforts to prevent domestic violence and attack its cultural roots. It had also established the human development credit programme, which benefited primarily women, and a programme that remunerated women caring for disabled persons.

46. The Inter-Institutional Committee on Women and Justice had been instrumental in the restructuring of the judiciary. Judges had been selected through affirmative action, and specialized courts had been established to

try cases of violence against women. At the same time, the Office of the Prosecutor had set up specialized domestic violence and sexual crime units. The President of the National Assembly was a woman, as were almost half of the judges on the National Court of Justice. Over the past seven years, women had held important Cabinet portfolios, and three of the Defence Ministers since 2007 had been women. On 24-25 October, the first International Meeting of Women Defence Ministers and Leaders would be held in Guayaquil.

47. **Ms. Alsarayie** (Kuwait) said that the Kuwaiti Constitution forbade discrimination on the basis of gender, origin, language or religion and that men and women were equal in rights and responsibilities under the law. At national level, Kuwait had established a commission on women's affairs that was responsible for coordinating the work of civil society institutions dealing with women's issues and raising awareness of conventions on women's rights. State policy on women focused on empowering women economically by increasing their work opportunities, supporting their political participation as candidates and voters, and providing assistance to women in need, including divorcees and widows. Women made an important contribution to Kuwaiti society and had also represented Kuwait commendably in various international venues. A milestone had recently been reached with the decision by the Supreme Judicial Council to allow women to serve as public prosecutors.

48. Kuwait had ratified various international instruments on women's rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two Protocols thereto concerning trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, and most recently, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

49. Kuwait supported all efforts by the Secretary-General to end the suffering of women worldwide, especially that of Palestinian women living under occupation. Her Government therefore called on the international community to provide all necessary support, in particular, to ensure their access to basic services. In that connection, her country valued the role of UN-Women in addressing gender equality,

advancing women's rights and promoting international cooperation on those issues and pledged to continue providing moral and material support for the gender entity.

50. **Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) said that the Sudan had made significant progress in the advancement of women. Under Sudanese law, women were guaranteed equal pay for equal work and were able to retire at the same age as men. The National Elections Act of 2008 had helped increase women's participation in Parliament to 25 per cent and in 2010, the first woman presidential candidate had stood for election. Implementation mechanisms had been established for various policies and strategies to promote women's rights and their economic empowerment, including a 25-year strategic plan for 2003-2027 and a national strategy for the family.

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

52. Rooted in its belief in women's vital role in society, his Government had adopted a national policy on women's advancement that focused on health, the environment, education, economic development, active participation in decision-making, conflict resolution, peace consolidation and preserving rights. Moreover, a number of administrative units had been established to mainstream the gender perspective in all areas of Government and federal ministries.

53. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Security had undertaken a rural development project for women in all Sudanese states, with a particular focus on the Darfur region. Measures included financing for small entrepreneurial projects, training programmes and awareness-raising campaigns on health, nutrition and women's rights.

54. A national plan to combat gender-based violence had been adopted in 2005, and a unit to combat violence against women and girls had been established within the Ministry of Justice. In addition, the Ministry of the Interior had established a community police unit to protect families and children, and a national strategy

to eradicate female genital mutilation had been launched in 2008.

55. The Consultative Council for Human Rights, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the human rights unit of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), had sought to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women in the Darfur region and to strengthen the World Health Organization protocol on the clinical management of rape survivors.

56. Greater efforts were needed to mitigate the impact on developing countries of the global economic crisis, climate change and environmental degradation, all of which had prevented States from fulfilling the obligations set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and, as a result, had hampered women's empowerment and development. His delegation therefore called for the cancellation of the debts of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, and the lifting of export restrictions in order to enable them to fulfil their commitment to the advancement of women.

57. **Ms. Dijkhuizen** (Netherlands) said that more than a quarter of the world's women could not participate in the world economy, and even in the Netherlands, half of adult women were not financially independent. Those figures represented immense opportunity. Women invested more than 60 per cent of their earnings in food, education and health care for their families. Furthermore, developing the enormous potential of women could create jobs and economic prosperity, boost innovation, reduce poverty and promote well-being.

58. Women entrepreneurs faced many barriers, from legal systems in some developing countries where women could not own property to social values in developed countries where women took on more than their fair share of domestic duties. Peer networks and high-profile role models could help women to stand up for their ambitions, and company owners could act as mentors. Microcredits and inclusive finance helped to stimulate women's entrepreneurship, but it was time to think bigger.

59. Entrepreneurship led to empowerment. With their own income, women gained respect by contributing to the family's earnings, and they had a means to escape from domestic violence. It was important to be alert to the potential of women entrepreneurs in their countries,

to do what could be done to remove obstacles and to encourage them to seek mentors.

60. **Mr. de Azeredo** (Brazil) said that combating inequalities and promoting inclusion were central to his Government's policies. Women, who were more likely to be poor than men, were the main beneficiaries of cash transfer programmes and housing credits, and in general, cash transfer programmes gave priority to children and pregnant and breastfeeding women. Rural technical assistance and extension programmes were successful in part because they focused on women and their role in Brazilian society. To reduce teenage pregnancies, the Government had widened access to information and free contraceptives. Efforts had been stepped up to prevent, diagnose and treat cervical and breast cancer, and measures had been taken to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS among women.

61. Brazil had long enforced firm policies on violence against women and girls and was working bilaterally and within the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) to improve assistance to women victims of violence in the context of trafficking in persons. The Government had already prepared measures to address potential violence against women, especially sexual exploitation and abuse, during the World Cup and the Olympic and Paralympic Games. It advocated a number of measures for combating gender-related violence, including establishing an international network to protect women in situations of violence; improving data collection on national and international violence against women; strengthening national and international legislation to combat violence against women and developing specific policies to tackle trafficking in women. It was crucial to acknowledge the relationship between violence against women and the spread of HIV/AIDS, as well as the need for multilateral Internet mechanisms that would ensure freedom of speech and privacy for all, including women.

62. Health services should respect the sexual and reproductive rights of women. An active participant in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, Brazil was also involved in such issues at the regional level, most recently through its participation in the first session of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in August 2013.

63. **Ms. Meunluang** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that women's rights were protected

under her country's Constitution and laws and promoted by a national strategy and plan for the advancement of women, a women's caucus within the National Assembly, the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and the Lao Women's Union. It was a party to international women's rights instruments and actively coordinated and participated in the relevant mechanisms and activities of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

64. As a result of her Government's strong commitment, almost half of all primary school students were girls, the percentage of women in non-agricultural employment had increased by a third, a quarter of the seats in the National Assembly were held by women, and steady progress was being made towards the 2015 target of 15 per cent representation of women at decision-making levels. Public health-care initiatives had contributed to a decline in maternal and child mortality. However, continued effort was needed to close the gender gap in higher education enrolment and to prevent trafficking in young women and girls, both of which were associated with poverty. It was also necessary to strengthen institutional capacity to implement and enforce existing instruments and mechanisms for combating violence against women.

65. **Mr. Abderahmane** (Mauritania) said that his Government's efforts to promote the advancement of women and their participation in decision-making were guided by a policy that enabled Mauritanian women to occupy scientific, political, administrative and military positions. At present, four Ministerial-level government posts were held by women. In 2010, a woman had been appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, the first appointment of its kind in the Arab world and one that attested to the political development of Mauritanian society.

66. Mauritania had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women among other relevant international instruments. Measures taken to promote the status of women included the adoption in 2001 of a personal status code, attention to reproductive health, competitive examinations that entailed an affirmative action provision, the expansion of awareness-raising campaigns to eliminate violence and discrimination against women and the allocation of study grants for girls.

67. **Ms. Boiko** (Ukraine) said that an improvement in public awareness of gender-based discrimination and other positive trends were reflected in her Government's recent reports to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/WG.6/14/UKR/1](#)) and the Human Rights Committee ([CCPR/C/UKR/7](#)). It valued the recommendations received, including with respect to further economic empowerment and increased participation in decision-making, and would continue working to implement them and to bring its national gender legislation in line with international and European standards. It had been an early supporter of the Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign and commended the work of UN-Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. It had been a sponsor of Security Council resolution [2106 \(2013\)](#) and had endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict issued by the major industrialized countries, which supported the development of an international protocol on the investigation and documentation of rape and sexual violence in conflict.

68. **Ms. Bruell-Melchior** (Monaco), commending the relentless efforts of United Nations-Women to promote the rights of women as equal partners in development, peace and security and humanitarian action, said that her Government would be hosting the 2013 Mediterranean Conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, on the topic of enhancing the role of women in public, political and economic life. It had been a sponsor of all of the Security Council resolutions on sexual violence against women in conflict, had enacted a national domestic violence law and had signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. It promoted women's rights through cooperation programmes on maternal health, education and microfinance.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.