



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
18 December 2013

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 15th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 17 October 2013, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria)
later: Mr. Thórsson (Vice-Chair) (Iceland)

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/>).

13-51624 (E)



Please recycle A small graphic of a recycling symbol, consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



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 (*continued*) (A/68/253, A/68/257, A/68/263, A/68/267, A/68/274, A/68/275 and A/68/487)

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

1. **Mr. Msosa** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that all SADC member States had ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and acceded to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Progress had been made in those States towards ending the use of children in armed conflict and combating the impunity of those who recruited them. There had also been a significant improvement in children's health, sanitation, nutrition levels and access to primary school education.

2. However, there were still enormous challenges to overcome, such as hunger, malnutrition, disease, sexual exploitation, violence and human trafficking. The Community had therefore committed to achieving the goals of the Second Decade of Education in Africa (2006-2015), so as to ensure children's safety in school and universal access to comprehensive, high quality basic education while strengthening scholastic information management systems. As a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, southern Africa had seen an increase in households headed by children. Consequently, some SADC member States had begun implementing programmes to ensure that such households benefited from social protection initiatives, and HIV/AIDS prevention was being mainstreamed in all areas of the Community's development agenda. SADC was also implementing a ten-year Strategic Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

3. The Government of Malawi realized that the abuse, exploitation and trafficking to which children were subjected were often the result of poverty. It had therefore instituted programmes such as cash transfers and school meals. In addition, police departments throughout the country had special child-friendly units where people were encouraged to report incidents of abuse. Furthermore, a recent Government initiative

encouraged local traditional leaders to combat social challenges such as child marriage and other harmful practices.

4. **Mr. Köhler** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, reiterated the Union's call to States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to withdraw any reservations contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention and its Optional Protocols. He underlined the importance of the new Optional Protocol on a communications procedure that allowed for individual complaints concerning the violation of children's rights, including by children themselves. Giving children a voice was a precondition for effective child protection.

5. At the end of 2013, the European Commission would be publishing the results of a study mapping the legislation, policies and practices of the member States of the European Union in order to ensure that article 12 of the Convention, concerning the right to be heard, was respected. Making the justice system more child-friendly was also a key action item under the Agenda for the Rights of the Child. The European Union had also played an active role in implementing a framework for action, adopted by the World Education Forum in 2000, which recognized the fundamental right of all children to a high quality education. Through the European Disability Strategy (2010-2020) it was also promoting the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including children with disabilities, in all relevant policies.

6. His delegation supported the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and would strive to improve the lives of children in line with the 2010 Review of the Implementation Strategy for the European Union Guidelines on Children in Armed Conflicts. The European Union addressed the problem of violence against children through external action and internal funding programmes. It called on States around the world to comply with the spirit of the recommendations contained in the United Nations Study on Violence against Children. Protecting the

victims of child trafficking and improving cooperation with third countries and international organizations were essential to the European Union Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings (2012-2016).

7. His delegation had strongly welcomed General Assembly resolution [67/146](#) on the elimination of female genital mutilations as well as the recent adoption of Human Rights Council resolution [24/23](#) on strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriages. Earlier in 2013, the European Union had adopted a new nutrition policy to enhance maternal and infant nutrition through its external assistance programmes, and to reduce the number of children under five who were stunted by or died from malnutrition. It encouraged all States and international organizations to redouble their efforts to ensure that the global nutrition targets agreed to in 2012 by States Members of the United Nations would be achieved.

8. Within the European Union, where child poverty had increased significantly in recent years, efforts to prevent child poverty and the transmission of disadvantage across generations were being enhanced by focusing on early intervention, including childhood education and measures to reduce inequality. According to the International Labour Organization, around 168 million of the world's children were involved in labour. Impoverished children often had to work, which could make it impossible for them to attend school. The European Union had increased synergies with the private sector by recognizing the need to support corporate social responsibility throughout the supply chain. That included combating child labour in line with internationally recognized guidelines. It had participated actively in the negotiations of the outcome document of the Third Global Conference on Child Labour, held in October 2013, and reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016. It had also promoted the ratification of the Decent Work for Domestic Workers Convention of the International Labour Organization, which had entered into force in September 2013.

9. He hoped that, in the very near future, every child, irrespective of origin, sex, language, religion or status, could enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant human rights instruments.

10. **Ms. Hanna** (Jamaica) said that a nation's character must be measured by its determination to create a peaceful and just environment for all its citizens, especially the most vulnerable, among whom were children. One of the fundamental rights of children was to a home and family. Her Government had therefore given priority to family-based care arrangements. It had also established new programmes to identify and assist abused children, and was amending its laws so that children with extreme behavioural problems could no longer be sent to juvenile penal institutions and would instead be placed in a therapeutic facility for psychological and psychiatric treatment.

11. In 2013, all children had been removed from adult correctional centres, where they had been held in separate dormitories from adults. Many children had been reintegrated with their families, while others had been relocated to new children-only remand spaces. Her Government was also moving to uphold international good practice by retrofitting police stations with children-only holding areas so that they would not come into contact with adult detainees. In order to increase the effectiveness of rehabilitation and protect the rights of the child, work had begun on the implementation of a policy to reduce the number of children who were charged with an offence and exposed to the criminal justice system.

12. Her Government had also instituted a national policy of reintegrating school-aged mothers into the formal school system and was addressing violence in schools by expanding its safe schools programme and pursuing anti-bullying and anti-gang initiatives. In her capacity as the Minister of Youth, she had invited a broad range of civil society, private sector, government and student representatives to serve on a task force for the support of children, which had been established to mobilize human and other resources and achieve national consensus to better support child protection. For Jamaica, safeguarding the rights of children was not just a legal or moral obligation but also a sound investment in its future.

13. **Ms. Miškinienė** (Lithuania) said that Parliament was considering a bill that would provide effective assistance to families at risk and reduce the number of children who were wards of the State. Her Government was also preparing the national education strategy for the period 2013-2022. It aimed to ensure adequate access to education and equal opportunities, while

developing non-formal education and giving particular attention to children in rural areas, gifted children and children at risk or with special needs. In addition, it would improve the availability of educational services for disabled children and provide assistance to them and their families.

14. In 2011, Parliament had adopted a law that categorized domestic violence as a public offence and recognized that children who witnessed such violence were also victims. All such child victims were provided psychological, legal and medical support through non-governmental organizations. In 2012, Parliament had also ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, as well as the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Additionally, the penal code had been amended to indicate that the consent of a victim of trafficking for the purposes of exploitation did not remove the liability of the perpetrator.

15. **Mr. Nardi** (Liechtenstein) expressed the hope that the Convention on the Rights of the Child would be ratified by every Member State by 2014, the twenty-fifth anniversary of its adoption. That commemoration should also be the occasion to promote the ratification of the Convention's Optional Protocols. It was imperative to give children or their representatives the opportunity to file complaints concerning violations of their rights under the Convention and its first two Optional Protocols.

16. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and welcomed her annual report, which illustrated the continued need to address impunity for the most serious violations of the rights of children. The Security Council should consider expanding, where relevant, the mandates of existing sanctions committees and allowing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to apply targeted measures against individuals. Furthermore, the Council should enhance its cooperation with international tribunals and consider making use of its power to refer matters to the International Criminal Court in a manner fully consistent with the Rome Statute. The outrageous and ongoing violations of the rights of children in the Syrian Arab Republic were a clear example of a situation for which a referral to the Court was needed.

17. In 2012, his Government, in close partnership with the non-governmental organization Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, had developed a mobile application which sought to provide international policymakers, United Nations personnel and non-governmental organizations access to key documents as well as recommendations on protecting the security and rights of children. The application compiled all thematic Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, identified the relevant underlying sources of international humanitarian and human rights law, and provided examples of model language on child protection from previous Security Council resolutions. It also included a checklist, intended for use by members of the Security Council, on mainstreaming child protection in Council resolutions.

18. His delegation had read with satisfaction how the different child protection mandates of the United Nations collaborated in practice while implementing their individual functions independently. It considered the aim of that report (A/68/253) fully achieved and did not see the need for further institutional follow-up. The resources for that effort could be put to much better use if fully applied to carrying out the different mandates.

19. **Ms. Bernadel** (Haiti) said that early childhood care remained an area of great concern for her Government. Through the leadership of the Ministry of Education and the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other partners, significant progress had been achieved in that area. In December 2012, her Government had defined a national framework for early childhood development, and in 2013 the Ministry of Education had proposed a new curriculum for preschools that would enter into effect as of the next school year. Despite such progress, early childhood care remained a major challenge.

20. According to UNICEF estimates, in developing countries approximately 23 per cent of all children between the ages of 5 and 14 were involved in child labour, and moreover millions of girls were victims of violence, exploitation and abuse. One of her Government's responses to those problems was to strengthen the Brigade for the Protection of Minors, a specialized unit of the Haitian National Police, which handled investigations into cases involving the abuse and exploitation of children and assisted children in danger. In addition, UNICEF was helping the Ministry of Education and other State institutions of Haiti

involved in early childhood issues to adopt policies, laws and instruments governing early childhood; design and implement a national multisectoral strategy for children's integral development; improve the quality of basic health, nutrition, protection and education services; and support parenting education while strengthening community structures for early childhood care.

21. Haiti's free education programme had already allowed more than 1.2 million children to attend school, and everywhere in the country schools and hospitals were being built or renovated. Whereas in 2005-2006 only 50 per cent of children aged 6 to 11 had attended school, in 2012 the percentage had risen to 77 per cent. During the same period, the rates of acute malnutrition and chronic malnutrition in that age group had been reduced from 10 per cent to 5 per cent, and from 29 per cent to 22 per cent, respectively.

22. Haiti had also ratified the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, among other instruments, and it had strengthened the legal framework governing the institutionalization of children.

23. **Mr. Lima** (Cabo Verde) said that, from the time of its struggle for independence, his country had believed that education was the only meaningful path to a sustainable future and that it must value its human resources, with special attention to children. Its Constitution afforded children special protections against any form of discrimination, abuse or sexual exploitation. It also expressly prohibited child labour and stated that any corporal punishment, ill treatment or lack of care that endangered children's physical, intellectual or emotional development must be deemed a crime. The Statute of the Child and of the Adolescent, recently adopted by Parliament, was a milestone framework that created a holistic approach to promoting and protecting children's rights.

24. At the international level, his country had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Child as well as to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In 1993 it had acceded to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and in 2012 it had signed the Optional Protocol to the

Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communication procedure. Moreover, it had achieved or was on track to achieve several Millennium Development Goals related to children, such as the targeted reductions in infant and child mortality, and in 2012 it had created two national bodies for the prevention and elimination of child labour.

25. Enrolment in his country's primary school programmes, which were free and mandatory, was close to 100 per cent, and the programme to provide hot meals to schoolchildren, established with the support of the World Food Programme (WFP), was believed to have reduced dropout rates significantly. The Ministry of Health, with the support of the World Health Organization, was leading a major vaccination campaign which was expected to immunize nearly all of the nation's youth against rubella and measles. All countries must address the issue of children without appropriate family care, and partnerships played a fundamental role in that regard. He commended SOS Children's Villages International for their work in Cabo Verde and elsewhere in the world, particularly their success in providing a loving, family-like environment to children deprived of traditional family care.

26. Children with disabilities were more likely than other children to be victims of violence, abuse and exploitation. His Government was committed to achieving their full integration into society and had been working closely with civil-society partners to provide them with inclusive education, health care and social protection. In order to achieve those goals, it had enacted legislation and established institutions, programmes and policies that specifically addressed issues related to disabilities.

27. Poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and climate change remained the biggest threats to the promotion and protection of the rights of children around the world and Cabo Verde, as a Small Island Developing State, was particularly vulnerable in that regard. The report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/68/257) showed that some progress had been made in each area covered by the Convention. However, it also identified several remaining challenges, including inadequate progress in combating or eliminating child poverty, violence against children, child labour and the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

28. The post-2015 development agenda would provide an integrated framework to fulfil the promise of creating a world fit for children. The international community must give voice to the millions of innocent children trapped in conflicts or brutally displaced and put in makeshift camps. Invoking the tragedy affecting entire families of asylum seekers, children included, who had recently drowned off the coast of Lampedusa, he questioned whether enough attention was being given to the injustice, intolerance, greed and poverty that pushed parents on the uncertain path of misery and migration. The General Assembly must act immediately to end such shameful and intolerable suffering.

29. **Mr. Vidal** (Uruguay) called on all States that had not yet ratified and implemented the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols to do so. Moreover, it was essential to ensure that the mandate of the Special Representative on Violence against Children continued to be carried out in an effective and sustainable manner. During the current session, Uruguay, acting on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, together with the European Union, would be introducing an omnibus draft resolution on the rights of the child which would incorporate the priority themes of that resolution from the sixty-first to sixty-fifth sessions, including children and poverty, the elimination of violence against children, child labour, the right of the child to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting him or her, and the implementation of child rights in early childhood. His Government condemned and was committed to combating child labour, and had been the first to ratify International Labour Organization Convention No. 189 concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers, the adoption of which was a milestone in the protection of children's rights.

30. Data from the last several years showed that his country's efforts had resulted in an ongoing decrease in poverty and malnutrition rates, near universal enrolment in primary and secondary education, the promotion of gender equality, reduced infant mortality and improved maternal health. However, there were structural hurdles that the country needed to overcome in order to accelerate the reduction in child poverty.

31. Universal, secular, mandatory and free education formed the basis upon which children were able to express their views freely in all matters affecting them. Early and healthy development of children required

special attention to their basic needs, correct identification of their vulnerabilities and concrete and effective protections, all of which were priorities that required immediate responses. Accordingly, children's rights must be given due consideration in the post-2015 development agenda.

32. **Mr. Rakovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that the promotion and protection of children's rights were priorities of his Government's social policy. The 2012-2017 national strategy for children included: strengthening financial support to large families and to disabled children; stepping up efforts to prevent all forms of violence against children; and providing assistance to families fostering orphans. A federal law had been enacted to protect children from dangerous content accessible through information technologies such as the Internet that contained scenes of aggression or violence, or that could lead to unlawful behaviour.

33. His country was firmly committed to carrying out its international legal obligations to protect the rights of the child. As a State party to the Convention and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, it had submitted its reports in that regard to the Committee on the Rights of the Child for consideration in January 2014. In September 2013, his Government had finalized its ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. During the preceding year it had also signed and ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

34. While welcoming the efforts of the international community to counter the global increase in violence against children, his delegation expressed particular concern about the repeated instances of violence and abuse directed against Russian children adopted by citizens of certain States. Unfortunately, the attempts by his country to have those guilty of such offences punished frequently met with inexplicable condescension on the part of the local judicial systems.

35. The authorized representative of the President of the Russian Federation on the rights of children oversaw the work of children's ombudsmen throughout the country, monitored the activities of State and public institutes dealing with children's issues and maintained widespread contacts abroad to protect the rights of Russian children living outside the country, including

as a result of international adoption. That system ensured the ongoing monitoring at the highest State level of observance of the rights of children.

36. **Ms. Velichko** (Belarus) said that, for the period 2012-2016, her Government was implementing a national plan of action to improve children's lives and protect their rights. It had attained ahead of schedule the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education, and it also provided nine years of comprehensive mandatory schooling. Special public education programmes were also provided to children with special needs, including special psychological needs, and distance learning was available to persons with disabilities.

37. Maternal and child health care were particularly important in her country on account of its low birth rate. It had also achieved ahead of schedule the Millennium Development Goal concerning child mortality rates, which were among the lowest in the region: 4 per 1,000 live births among infants under the age of one, and 6 for 1,000 live births for children under the age of five.

38. Initiatives were also being implemented in cooperation with UNICEF, including a mandatory vaccination programme that had achieved a national coverage rate of 99 per cent, surpassing the level of 95 per cent set by the World Health Organization (WHO). Additionally, special attention was given to the 13 per cent of children living in the Chernobyl region, whose health was monitored through annual check-ups and who were provided with free school meals and free stays in health resorts. In order to protect children from unsuitable living conditions, assistance was provided to families in crisis situations. As for orphans, the State encouraged their upbringing in families rather than institutions; progress in that area had been commended by UNICEF.

39. Children's rights were also protected by a national commission for the protection of children, a foster care system, and a 24-hour telephone hotline that children could call for help in cases of family violence. Protective measures were taken to assist children in conflict with the law; and there were plans to set up a system of courts to deal with cases involving minors. Her Government invited all States, international organizations and civil-society organizations to take part in a regional UNICEF conference being organized

in her country in 2014 on improving national systems protecting the rights of the child.

40. **Ms. Fontana** (Switzerland) called on all States that had not yet done so to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and also underlined the importance of protecting schools and universities against military use, an objective which the draft Lucens Guidelines aimed to achieve. The persistent impunity of those who perpetrated crimes against children during armed conflict and disasters must be ended. States were responsible for making sure that effective investigations were carried out and that the perpetrators were prosecuted and punished.

41. Achieving gender equality would unleash the full potential of half the world's population and greatly contribute to poverty eradication, sustainable development, peace, security and the respect of human rights. Her Government commended efforts to stop early and forced marriages and noted that the recent adoption of Human Rights Council resolution [24/23](#) on strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage was a significant advance in that regard. Girls had the right to control their own bodies and be free from coercion and sexual violence. In order for girls to make informed decisions about their health and bodies they must have full access to comprehensive sex education as well as to contraception, reproductive health services and safe abortions.

42. In conclusion, she announced that her Government, in collaboration with the Terre des Hommes Foundation, would be holding a World Congress on Juvenile Justice in Geneva in January 2015.

43. **Ms. Razzouk** (United States of America) expressed horror at the indiscriminate killing of civilians, including thousands of children, by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. Its barbaric use of chemical weapons, which had killed hundreds of children on 21 August 2013, was just one example of the unconscionable torment endured by children in many parts of the world. Her Government condemned attacks on schools and hospitals in the Syrian Arab Republic, the torture and abuse of children in Syrian Government detention centres, the unlawful use of child soldiers, and the denial of access to international humanitarian organizations. According to the

Executive Director of UNICEF, as of August 2013 one million Syrian children had fled their country as refugees.

44. Reports of early and forced marriage and of young girls being victims of human trafficking were shocking and saddening. Every effort must be made to protect children from senseless violence, abuse and exploitation. In contrast, in 2013 the international community had also witnessed the power of a child. The United Nations had celebrated a day in honour of Malala Yousafzai, who had spoken out for the right of all Pakistanis, especially girls, to an education. She had survived being shot by extremists who opposed that right. On 12 July, before a large audience at United Nations headquarters, she had called upon youth to empower themselves with “the weapon of knowledge” and never to remain silent in the face of injustice.

45. With 57 million children around the world currently not attending school, the need for action, in addition to words, was extremely urgent. Her delegation commended the leadership of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which was implementing innovative programs designed to make education accessible to more children, especially girls. It also commended the lifesaving work being done by UNICEF on a wide range of issues — from preventing child mortality to ensuring child protection — as well as its work with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to address harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and cutting. Her Government was a proud partner of the Together for Girls initiative, with five United Nations agencies and the private sector, to address sexual violence against girls.

46. Lastly, her Government agreed with the Special Representative on Violence against Children that children with disabilities were exposed to higher risks of violence than other children. They must be equal participants in society and be given every opportunity to live up to their fullest potential.

47. **Ms. Sumi** (Japan) said that poverty, social inequality, disease, conflict, sexual exploitation and human trafficking still afflicted many children. In order to protect children from those and other threats, Japan had worked vigorously towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and had implemented financial commitments in the areas of education and health. Her Government believed that the goal of

providing universal health coverage should be incorporated into the post-2015 development agenda.

48. In spite of concerted efforts to combat child pornography, the number of its victims was growing. Several ministries in Japan were facilitating methods to block searches for and the dissemination of child pornography on the Internet, while also strengthening cooperation with police investigators in other countries. Her Government had recently adopted legislation that would allow it to progress towards signing the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

49. Japan had been one of the sponsors of General Assembly resolution [67/152](#) on the rights of the child, which called for the elimination of violence against children. In order to improve compliance with laws prohibiting corporal punishment in schools and child abuse in the family, her Government published information and provided teacher training on those issues.

50. **Ms. Bar-Sadeh** (Israel) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was a promise to give special attention and protection to children. The family of nations was responsible for ensuring that children across the globe were given the opportunities to fulfil their potential. For too many children, those opportunities were scarce. The Special Representative on violence against children had emphasized the urgent need for an explicit ban of all forms of violence against children. Currently, Israel was among a mere 34 countries with a ban on corporal punishment of children.

51. Her Government was working diligently to ensure the provision of services for children at risk, while funding and collaborating with non-governmental organizations that advocated for children's rights, assisted victims of abuse, operated day care centres, and improved and expanded on State-provided services such as counselling and training. Israel was proud to have served for one year on the Executive Board of UNICEF, where it had played a meaningful role in promoting the organization's crucial efforts. Her delegation welcomed the particular attention given by the Special Representative and UNICEF to the elimination of violence in early childhood, and to children with disabilities. Their initiatives, as well as those of the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization, offered children a lifeline in the midst of

domestic abuse, harmful social norms, denial of education, disease and many other problems.

52. The Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography was to be commended for putting a spotlight on some of the most atrocious crimes against children, and efforts to combat the increase in child trafficking must be redoubled. Her delegation also commended SADC and Canada for their remarkable initiatives, which raised global awareness of the plight of vulnerable children, particularly that of girls, and aimed to safeguard their rights. In 2012, on the first International Day of the Girl Child, they and her Government had jointly called for an end to child marriage.

53. Children must be at the core of the post-2015 development agenda. In March 2014, her Government's Agency for International Development Cooperation, MASHAV, would host an international workshop on early childhood education for children with special needs. Another MASHAV programme, which aimed to improve maternal and child health services in Kumasi, Ghana, had achieved great results, including increased access to antenatal and post-partum care; a reduction in the rates of infant mortality and maternal morbidity and mortality; improved immunization coverage; and effective health education for mothers.

54. **Mr. Milubi** (South Africa) said that his Government had established a national system to address children's issues, as well as a dedicated Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities, which promoted equitable access to development opportunities for those vulnerable groups. Through substantial investments in early childhood development and high quality education — 20 per cent of the national budget had been allocated to education in 2013 — his country had achieved the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education before the target date of 2015. His Government had also launched an integrated school health programme, through which health education and services were provided at schools.

55. A comprehensive set of initiatives had been implemented to reduce child mortality rates, with priority given to the health and rights of the most vulnerable children, including those living in poverty, residing in rural areas, and/or affected by HIV/AIDS. According to recent statistics, the rate of mother-to-

child transmission had declined to 2.7 per cent. To combat poverty, his Government also provided child support grants to families. In order to prevent child trafficking, the United Nations system, working in partnership with Member States must develop, adopt and implement sustainable and context-specific strategies, including the establishment of a legal framework to protect both victims and witnesses.

56. Armed conflict continued disproportionately to affect children, who were the most vulnerable to attacks, forced recruitment and deprivation of their basic human rights. International law clearly provided that the primary responsibility to protect children rested with the State. There should be no impunity for perpetrators of serious crimes against children in conflict and post-conflict settings. His delegation therefore welcomed the statement by the President of the Security Council ([S/PRST/2013/8](#)) in which the Council expressed strong concern over the high number of repeat offenders who openly disregarded Council resolutions and stressed the Council's commitment to effectively deal with persistent perpetrators. His Government had made combating violence against children a priority, resulting in increased legislative action, policy interventions and information campaigns to safeguard children's freedom from violence.

57. **Mr. Valli** (Monaco) said that national, regional and international actions must be coordinated in order to improve children's health and education, while protecting them against violence. Although child mortality rates had fallen significantly over the past 50 years, much remained to be done, particularly if Millennium Development Goal 4 (reduce child mortality) was to be achieved. His Government therefore supported the Every Woman Every Child initiative and the UNICEF initiative entitled "Committing to child survival: a promise renewed", which protected children through concrete projects focused on maternal and infant health.

58. Access to free, high quality education was also essential in promoting children's rights. Despite the substantial progress achieved in recent years, it appeared that primary education would not become universal by the 2015 target. In addition to demonstrating its commitment to education through its actions as a member of the Executive Board of UNESCO, his Government had made education a primary focus of the framework agreement on

cooperation signed with the International Organization of the Francophonie in November 2012.

59. His Government attached special importance to the protection of children against all forms of violence and exploitation. Accordingly, it had strengthened the nation's legal framework and standards as well as its prevention and assistance structures.

60. **Mr. Tshering** (Bhutan) said that the rights of children formed a core value of his Government's development philosophy, which was geared towards creating the conditions for its people, particularly children, to achieve lasting happiness. Addressing the challenges of the social sector and improving nutrition levels, particularly among children, were key priorities of the current five-year plan for development, and the highest budget outlay in the current financial year had been allocated to education. His country was already a party to several international and regional conventions on the protection and promotion of the rights of children, and was currently focusing on implementing national measures concerning those rights. Bhutan had also made good progress towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals related to achieving universal primary education and ensuring gender equality in education.

61. Over the past three years, his Government had enacted several laws concerning children's rights and welfare, including ones on childcare and protection, adoption, and the prevention of domestic violence. It had also adopted a national policy that provided guidelines on streamlining youth development programs and services. The legal codes contained explicit provisions for child-friendly procedures in cases involving children, and both houses of Parliament had committees that focused on issues related to children.

62. The National Commission for Women and Children had promoted awareness among parliamentarians, bureaucrats, civil society organizations and the media of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The establishment of a Women and Child Protection Unit within the Royal Bhutan Police had strengthened protections of the rights, welfare and interests of women and children. He expressed the hope that the rights of children would be integrated into any post-2015 development agenda. As his country

continued to pursue many important development programs geared towards protecting and promoting the rights of its children, it would count on the support of its development partners.

63. *Mr. Thórsson (Iceland), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

64. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that his Government was strongly committed to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of children — particularly the most vulnerable children — in all its policies. Earlier in 2013 it had completed its preparation of a joint report covering the period from 2008 to 2012. That report focused on the implementation of his country's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Child in the following areas: general principles, civil rights and freedoms, family environment and alternative care, basic health care and well-being, education, recreation and cultural activities, and special protective measures.

65. His country had benefited from a close and productive partnership with UNICEF. That partnership aimed to achieve greater equity for and social inclusion of children and was specifically focused on the most disadvantaged children, including those with disabilities. His Government had also approved a national goal for social inclusion along with specific measures to improve the quality of life of vulnerable children. A wide range of measures had been developed and/or implemented, including the gradual replacement of institutional foster care facilities with a social services network at the community level similar to a family environment, promoting early childhood development and providing increased support for families of children with disabilities. Priority was being given to the replacement of foster care institutions for children with disabilities and medical and social homes for children of up to age three. A national programme was also being implemented to provide children with special needs equal access to high quality education and training, with a view to integrating them into mainstream schools. In 2012, 84 pilot schools had been approved as part of the "Inclusive Education" project.

66. His Government had just signed a new action plan for the period 2013-2017 with UNICEF. The plan focused on critically important goals: increasing the national capacity for social inclusion, reducing child poverty and improving marginalized children's access to education, health care and protection. UNICEF had

played an essential role in providing advocacy and fostering multi-stakeholder involvement in the reforms that his country had implemented in the child protection sector, especially by broadening partnerships with the business sector. Bulgaria and UNICEF were also exploring the possibility of joint development projects in third countries. As a result of its reform efforts, Bulgaria had developed innovative practices in the areas of early childhood care, health and education which were considered potential models for other countries. Some of those practices had been presented during a high-level regional conference in 2012 in Sofia.

67. His country was affected by a daily influx of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic. Despite financial restrictions, his Government had provided additional resources in order to guarantee adequate accommodation and services to the refugees, especially women and children, and it was actively engaged in addressing their social, educational and health care needs. Measures were being taken to protect vulnerable refugee children from violence and discrimination and to provide them with psychological help in order to foster their adaptation and integration. In order to respond to the tremendous challenge of addressing the needs of large numbers of displaced persons, his Government would continue to rely on the advice and support of United Nations agencies, including UNICEF.

68. **Ms. Solórzano-Arriagada** (Nicaragua) said that her country relied on a number of national and international instruments to protect the rights of children and adolescents, including its Constitution, its national code on childhood and adolescence, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It had also developed various social programmes to assist Nicaraguan families and children, including one called the Love Programme, which aimed to improve the living conditions of socially vulnerable children and adolescents with the participation of their families, communities and responsible institutions. Efforts to integrate children with disabilities into the educational system would also continue to be strengthened.

69. Nicaragua's struggle against child mortality continued, and projections for 2015 set the country on pace to achieve a rate of 19 deaths per 1,000 live births. In order for all children to gain access to the rights of citizenship, massive birth registration drives were being organized. Child development centres were

being established to care for children with working mothers and to improve their educational, nutritional and health conditions. Nearly 8,000 children were expected to attend such centres by 2016. In conclusion, she noted that the International Labour Organization (ILO) had recently declared Nicaragua free of child labour.

70. **Mr. Al-Moumani** (Jordan), noting that children represented 46.2 per cent of his country's population, said that the Government had made major efforts to limit child labour through national plans and strategies. His country guaranteed all children — including those in rural or disadvantaged areas, as well as those with learning difficulties — a right to free education.

71. However, the increasing number of Syrian refugees in Jordan, many of them children, represented a challenge for the implementation of Government programmes. More than 60,000 Syrian children were enrolled in public schools for the 2013-2014 school year, which had led to the school day being divided into morning and afternoon sessions to allow attendance by all children.

72. **Mr. Diallo** (Senegal) said that his Government, which was a party to nearly every other human rights instrument, had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communication procedure. However, the report of the Secretary-General on the status of that Convention showed the difficulty of implementing the rights recognized in those instruments, especially when they were deliberately violated. Senegal condemned the use of children as soldiers and the violence, including sexual violence, perpetrated against children, as well as the attacks perpetrated by armed groups against hospitals and schools. While poverty was not the sole cause of the military recruitment of children, it was its primary vector.

73. As part of a policy of universal medical coverage and with a view to accelerating the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 4 (reduce child mortality), his Government had made medical care and hospitalization free of charge for children under the age of five. It was also implementing a proactive policy to reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, currently limited to 0.7 per cent, by developing an initiative within the national programme to combat HIV/AIDS that aimed to reduce the vulnerability of orphans and disadvantaged children to the risks of

illness, dropping out of school and undernourishment. In order to improve the school enrolment rate, which was currently at 86 per cent, a national programme had been implemented to provide disadvantaged children under the age of six with health care and meals in addition to schooling.

74. **Mr. Kihurani** (Kenya) said that education was vital for the full realization of an individual's potential and was central to a country's social and economic development. Over the 50 years since his country's independence, cultural barriers to educating girls had been reduced, and differences between boys' and girls' enrolment had declined considerably. Various policies, including the integration of early childhood development into basic education, were continuing to improve the net enrolment rates of both girls and boys, which had been 95.7 per cent in 2011. Consequently, Kenya was expected to achieve the Millennium Development Goal concerning universal primary education by 2015. In addition, over the next three years, the Government would be implementing a programme to provide laptop computers to pupils in grade 1.

75. Despite the efforts of various Governments, under-five child mortality remained unacceptably high. His Government was collaborating with many stakeholders and partners to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Such efforts must be sustained, otherwise advances made over the last decade risked being wiped away. Kenya was one of the 22 countries of priority listed under the Global Plan Towards the Elimination of New HIV Infections among Children by 2015 and Keeping Their Mothers Alive: 2011-2015. Under that plan, Kenya had launched a national campaign to stop new HIV infections among children by 2015. The campaign sought to mobilize Kenyans to take both individual and social responsibility to prevent all new HIV infections in children and promote maternal health. It also encouraged men to undergo voluntary HIV testing, to always accompany their expectant partners to antenatal clinics, and to participate fully in protecting the health of their children and their children's mothers. The Government had also eliminated pre- and post-maternal care fees in public health facilities, which would reduce child and maternal mortality rates.

76. Child abuse remained a problem in the most modern of cities as well as the most traditional of rural communities, and children with disabilities were three

to four times more likely to be victims of violence. His Government had launched its first survey on violence against children and was developing and executing a comprehensive plan which combined both a long-term investment in violence prevention and a commitment to improving the functioning of State institutions. The programmes concerned included helplines, shelters and rescue homes, legal aid clinics, psychosocial support services, rehabilitation and resettlement services, and gender desks in police stations. In addition, male involvement groups had been formed to champion the rights of women.

77. The impacts of poverty and HIV/AIDS had led to an increase in the number of households headed by children. In 2007, his Government, together with partners, had established a cash transfer programme for orphans and vulnerable children. As of March 2012, it had been assisting over 130,000 households and was having a significant impact on reducing poverty and increasing school enrolment.

78. **Mr. Choi Won Seok** (Republic of Korea) said that the international community must redouble its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by their target date, especially those relating to the protection and promotion of children's rights, which should also be a central goal of the post-2015 development agenda. The most vulnerable and disadvantaged children should be given priority in those efforts. Children with disabilities, indigenous children, those in remote rural areas and especially those in conflict zones suffered the most and were the most vulnerable to poverty and marginalization. Financial, food and energy crises and the ever-increasing negative impacts of climate change had exacerbated their exclusion and exploitation. His Government commended UNICEF for its efforts to reach those groups and sincerely hoped its work would enhance social inclusion.

79. The international community should engage more actively to free every child from violence, exploitation and abuse. Numerous children were still suffering from human trafficking and armed conflict, and many girls were also the victims of female genital mutilation, child marriages and sexual violence.

80. Children's education must be prioritized in all development activities, as it was essential to overcoming poverty and an invaluable tool for empowerment, as well as a driver of economic growth. In the early 1960s, the gross domestic product (GDP)

per capita of his country had been no more than 100 dollars. Since then, the Republic of Korea had evolved into an economic power despite the absence of domestic natural resources. That success had largely resulted from generations of investment in education and the development of human capital.

81. **Ms. Masni Mah** (Singapore) said that, with regard to children, her Government's policies centred on education, physical and mental well-being, and strengthening the family unit. According to the World Economic Forum in its Global Competitiveness Index for 2012-2013, her country ranked third in the quality of its educational system. It had a high literacy rate of 96 per cent and a low unemployment rate of 2 per cent. The Compulsory Education Act ensured that every Singaporean child received a minimum of six years of primary education as a foundation for continued education and training.

82. However, her Government acknowledged that some children may not enjoy equal educational opportunities because of their social background. It was therefore improving access to affordable, high quality preschool education. In 2013, it had launched the Early Childhood and Development Agency, which would address all aspects of children's development below age six in both kindergartens and childcare centres.

83. The educational system included specialized schools that catered to children's interests and talents in the arts, sports, mathematics and sciences. Programmes offered at technical schools and universities were wide ranging and were regularly reviewed to stay relevant and meet changing social and economic needs. In addition, various State and community-based financial assistance schemes provided funds for textbooks, uniforms, computers, breakfast and overseas learning programmes.

84. Singapore had a low infant mortality rate of 1.8 per 1,000 births and all children were required to receive a series of vaccinations before first enrolling in school. Free dental health services were also provided in all primary schools. All of her country's teachers were trained in basic counselling skills to identify children who may need special help. In addition, full time counsellors were deployed to assist children who required more intensive interventions. As part of the curriculum, children were also taught social and emotional competencies such as self-management,

relationship management and responsible decision-making.

85. To ensure the involvement of both parents during a child's early years, mothers enjoyed 16 weeks of paid maternity leave, while fathers could take one week of paternity leave. Parents were also allowed six days of childcare leave, and infant and childcare subsidies were available. In April 2013, her Government had launched an initiative known as FamilyMatters! to equip families with the skills and knowledge to enhance quality of family life through partnerships with schools, employers, businesses and community partners. It had also established a legal protection framework under the Children and Young Persons Act.

86. **Mr. Zhang** Guixuan (China) said that in recent years, thanks to continuous efforts by the international community, national Governments and civil society, steady progress had been made in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. At the same time, in many parts of the world, children continued to be affected by poverty, hunger, disease, disasters, child labour, drugs, sexual violation, war and conflicts. His Government believed that the international community should work together to maintain world peace, so that children were spared the scourge of war and instability.

87. Developed countries should take on more responsibilities by providing financial and technical support to developing countries, with a view to creating a favourable environment for the healthy growth of children. His Government had put in place a relatively comprehensive legal system for the protection of the rights of the child, and had established special agencies focusing on children, thus providing effective legal and institutional guarantees for the protection of the rights of the child. It was also endeavouring to achieve all the goals and targets of its national program of action for child development.

88. His Government had acceded to a series of international treaties dedicated to the protection of the rights of the child. In 2010, it had submitted its joint third and fourth reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its initial report on the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In 2013, it had sent a delegation to attend the consideration of those reports by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, where it had engaged in a frank, pragmatic and constructive dialogue. His Government

would continue to fulfil its international responsibilities and cooperate with other Member States in an effort to further promote the healthy development of children throughout the world.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.