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

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

Agenda item 69: Promotion and protection of human rights *(continued)* (A/68/487)

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms *(continued)* (A/68/56, A/68/176,

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(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives *(continued)*

(A/68/276, A/68/319, A/68/331, A/68/376, A/68/377, A/68/392, A/68/397 and A/68/503; A/C.3/68/3)

1. **Ms. Astiasarán Arias** (Cuba) said that obstacles to the exercise of human rights would be removed only through dialogue based on international norms and the Charter of the United Nations, without imposition of double standards. More effort should be made to eradicate extreme poverty, illiteracy and lack of access to health, education and food, which characterized the unjust international order. Given the current global crisis, human beings, in particular women, should be central to development processes, and international good governance should be fostered to prevent the countries of the South from becoming dependent on aid.

2. Her Government opposed selective initiatives against developing countries to further the hegemonic interests of certain Powers. All human rights questions should be addressed through the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council, without distinction or politicization. Her Government had submitted its second report within the framework of that review in February 2013, and the recommendations of the States participating in the dialogue had reflected Cuba's progress in the protection of human rights. She reiterated her

Government's willingness to cooperate with the holders of all United Nations mandates established on a non-discriminatory basis and in compliance with the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council, despite the policy of hostility and the genocidal embargo imposed by the United States, and various fierce anti-Cuban media campaigns.

3. At meetings of the Committee, the representatives of powerful nations accused numerous countries of human rights violations as if they were at a court of inquisition. Certain Western States ignored violations which had shocked the world, such as prisons, secret flights, kidnappings, the contentious legal status of so-called unlawful combatants, concentration camps and the thousands of extrajudicial killings carried out using drones, in an attempt to gloss over their historic and current responsibility for crimes which remained unpunished. The hypocrisy and spurious policies which furthered those Powers' interests should be exposed. Respect for human rights, diversity and the right to self-determination should govern the international community's work. Any attempt to dismantle that legacy through the imposition of Northern capitalist models was a grave human rights violation.

4. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that since democracy, security and social justice were closely tied to the economy, it was impossible to build cohesive, democratic, autonomous societies capable of withstanding fluctuations in the global economy unless human rights and dignity were fully respected. For that reason, human rights must be included in the post-2015 development agenda, which should aim to achieve justice, reduce poverty, combat discrimination and exclusion and ensure a decent life for all.

5. Tunisia was in the process of building a pluralist, democratic society; all political parties, civil society actors and national organizations would be included in drafting the country's new constitution. Its primary concern was to ensure respect for human rights and civil liberties, in accordance with the expectations of the Tunisian people. Her Government had passed a general amnesty law for political prisoners and established the principle of gender parity among the members of the Constituent Assembly. It had also acceded to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention for the

Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

6. Her Government's new social and economic strategy focused on reducing unemployment to combat inequalities. At the international level, concerted efforts were needed to establish an inter governmental mechanism to reduce youth unemployment, under the supervision of the General Assembly. Her Government was also committed to combating illegal immigration by ratifying bilateral agreements with neighbouring European States.

7. Although the Tunisian people were working autonomously towards completing their democratic transition, they called on the international community to support them during that process, which, despite its challenges, represented a historic opportunity to fulfil their legitimate hopes for social justice and a decent life. No one should be excluded from development, regardless of location or status; increased international efforts were required to achieve equitable and sustainable development.

8. Her delegation was committed to reinforcing international mechanisms to guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms. In that regard, it called on the international community to support its proposed initiative to establish an international constitutional court to which anyone in the world could report violations of universal norms, civil and democratic liberties and human rights.

9. **Mr. Aldehani** (Kuwait) denounced the construction of illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by the Israeli authorities, who continued to violate Palestinians' human rights by restricting their movement, confiscating their land, destroying their homes, illegally arresting and detaining thousands of prisoners and imposing a blockade against the Gaza Strip. Such actions were in violation of humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant United Nations resolutions; it was the duty of the international community to put a stop to those violations and oblige the occupying Israeli forces to fulfil their international legal obligations. Kuwait fully endorsed the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, contained in document [A/68/376](#), and urged States to

support draft resolution [A/HRC/22/L.43](#), "Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination".

10. His delegation condemned the massacre of Syrian people and the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The United Nations must endeavour to find a way to end the violence and secure humanitarian aid for the vast numbers of internally displaced people and refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic and neighbouring countries. He welcomed the decision of the Secretary-General to convene the second donor's conference in Kuwait in early 2014, which he hoped would bring together international efforts to reduce the suffering of the Syrian people. The Geneva II conference should be held as soon as possible to help the Syrian people achieve a peaceful transition to democracy.

11. His delegation remained committed to promoting a culture of human rights and strengthening cooperation with the entire international community to ensure the full inclusion of human rights in the post-2015 development agenda.

12. **Ms. Al-Temimi** (Qatar) said that her Government had taken active steps to promote human rights; it had acceded to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and had signed a number of other regional and international agreements on human rights. At the governmental level, it had set up human rights offices at the Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs and Justice, and the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. At the non-governmental level, it had founded the National Human Rights Committee, the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children, the Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking, Silatech, an organization which aimed to improve economic conditions for young people in the Arab region, and Reach Out to Asia, which promoted education in the Asian region. The United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region, which had recently been established in Qatar, had been gaining regional influence and was now receiving increasing numbers of requests for training and documentation following recent political upheavals in the Arab region.

13. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 had recently drawn attention to violations committed against Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian

Territory, including illegal detention, humiliation and excessive use of force, and had recommended that Israel should stop denying Palestinians their legitimate share of water resources in the Gaza Strip. In the Syrian Arab Republic, there were mounting indications that the Syrian regime was committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, resulting in the displacement of millions of civilians, which could have devastating economic, political and social consequences for the Syrian Arab Republic and neighbouring countries. The suffering of the Syrian people had already lasted for over two years; every day, human rights violations by the Syrian regime were exceeding everyone's worst expectations, leaving the country exposed to terrorism and destruction. All parties to the conflict must strictly abide by international human rights law and take all available measures to protect the human rights of the Syrian people.

14. **Mr. Pedersen** (Norway) said that the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic was a shocking crime for which those responsible must be held accountable. All parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, must put an end to the human rights violations, killings and abuses, and allow humanitarian relief operations to help the millions of refugees and internally displaced people in the country. His Government welcomed the efforts of neighbouring countries to help refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic.

15. The safeguarding of freedom of expression and privacy had become an important human rights issue in the light of technological developments which had made it easier to monitor, filter, censor and block communications. Journalists, human rights defenders and political activists were increasingly subject to arbitrary surveillance. Human rights standards must be respected in cyberspace, including in matters of State security; the application of generic international norms, however, led to challenges which the international community must overcome.

16. Under the 1998 Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, States were responsible for protecting human rights defenders. However, such defenders were often subject to threats and violence. Women human rights defenders in particular faced systemic discrimination, many gender-specific violations went unpunished, and those

working on corporate-related violations were increasingly being persecuted.

17. Religious minorities were particularly vulnerable to violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief and were victims of hate speech and discrimination in many countries. The international community should focus more on combating discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and should confront extremist ideologies, prejudice and intolerance. Governments should combat hate speech and negative stereotyping not through censorship but through argument and debate.

18. The increase in the number of Human Rights Council mandates and requests for support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was widening the gap between expectations and financial resources. The Office's increasing dependence on voluntary contributions was particular cause for concern. She urged all countries to ensure that it had adequate resources while remaining independent.

19. **Mr. Ruidiaz** (Chile) said that his Government had received the visits of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in 2012 and of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism in July 2013. It welcomed the closer cooperation of national human rights institutions with the treaty bodies in recent years. Chile's National Human Rights Institute had presented supplementary reports within the universal periodic review framework and had been represented on the Chilean delegation to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2012 and to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2013.

20. Human rights defenders were essential to a rights-based approach, and civil society organizations rightly demanded meaningful participation and accountability on the part of Governments and international institutions. His Government agreed with the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders in her report to the General Assembly (A/68/262) that civil society and human rights defenders should participate in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. In response to the recent rise in the number of acts of

intimidation against civil society and human rights defenders, his Government had supported Human Rights Council resolutions 24/21, on civil society space, and 24/24, on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights. His Government also sought to improve the environment in which civil society organizations operated at the General Assembly by promoting better standards and good practices. It had adopted an act on associations and citizen participation in public administration, with a view to ensuring a democratic society which fostered transparency.

21. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence had emphasized in his report to the General Assembly (A/68/345) that transitional justice was essential in building confidence and social capital. The capacities and accountability of security and justice institutions should be increased, and justice should be incorporated in the post-2015 development agenda.

22. His Government agreed with the proposal made by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in his interim report to the General Assembly (A/68/290) that a gender perspective should be incorporated into programmes for the promotion and protection of freedom of religion. It had volunteered to host a meeting in 2014 to monitor the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief.

23. **Mr. Wang Min** (China) said that global human rights endeavours faced a range of challenges in a world undergoing profound and complex changes. Developing countries were facing daunting difficulties in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and effectively realizing the right to development. In areas marked by instability and conflict, ensuring people's right to life and development remained a long, uphill struggle. Discrimination on the basis of religion, colour, gender and race remained a concern worldwide and many traditional human rights issues had yet to be effectively addressed.

24. There was an ongoing tendency to politicize human rights issues, as some countries continued to impose double standards and interfere in other countries' domestic affairs. There was no "one-size-

fits-all" approach to the promotion and protection of human rights; Western countries should fully respect the endeavours of other countries, particularly developing countries, in ensuring human rights on the basis of their own national conditions. They should do so through constructive dialogue and cooperation with developing countries, rather than political confrontation.

25. In working together on human rights issues and dealing with differences, the international community must strictly observe the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, including respect for State sovereignty, non-interference in others' internal affairs, maintaining peace and opposing aggression, promoting equality and opposing power politics. Attempts by individual countries to create humanitarian crises under the cloak of humanitarian intervention must be averted; all countries should treat each other as equals in addressing human rights issues, on the basis of inclusiveness and mutual trust.

26. Efforts should be made to ensure that all human rights were given the same importance. Some countries deliberately highlighted political and civil rights and intentionally or unintentionally ignored economic, social, and cultural rights, even though many parts of the world were plagued by war, poverty and hunger.

27. The choice of each country regarding the path of human rights development must be respected. It had been proven repeatedly that a country must proceed from its own realities and rely on the efforts of its own Government and people in order to promote and protect human rights. External forces could play only a supporting role. The international community should fully respect developing countries' demand for prioritizing the rights to life and development, provide them with technical assistance and help build their capacity. More importantly, developed countries must demonstrate political sincerity, faithfully fulfil their official development assistance commitments, increase their financial and technical support to developing countries, and help them to effectively realize the right to development.

28. Human rights differences should be addressed through dialogue and cooperation. Power politics did not serve the principle of democracy; the imposition of pressure did not result in a culture of human rights development. It was a reality that countries differed in social systems, development levels, religious traditions

and ideologies; they should work together to promote the international cause of human rights.

29. For its part, China had adopted a socialist human rights development path, reflecting its own realities, with respect for and protection of human rights as a constitutional and a governance principle. The country now enjoyed rapid economic growth, substantial improvements in living standards and steady progress in the development of democracy and the rule of law. It was advancing human rights in a well-planned, steady, and comprehensive manner.

30. His Government participated actively in international human rights exchanges and cooperation. It maintained cooperation with OHCHR) and its special mechanisms and, every year, conducted human rights dialogue and consultations with nearly 20 other countries. His Government was ready to receive the visit of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice and invited the Special Rapporteurs on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, respectively, and the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, to visit China in 2014.

31. No country had a perfect human rights record. The situation in China could still be improved, and good faith suggestions and criticism which took into account the country's realities were welcome in that regard. The finger-pointing and attacks on China's human rights record by some Western countries, however, were unwarranted and unhelpful. Their real purpose was to change China's political system and reroute its development path, to which his Government remained firmly committed, and which would prove, over time, to be superior.

32. **Mr. Emiliou** (Cyprus) said that 39 years after the Turkish invasion, the occupation of more than one third of his country continued amid massive violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Worldwide, Cyprus had the highest proportion of internally displaced persons as a percentage of its population. The bi-communal Committee on Missing Persons had helped to exhume, identify and return the remains of more than 400 Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot

missing persons, and his Government was assisting that Committee in its work. The task of determining the fate of missing persons went beyond the Committee's scope, however. The European Court of Human Rights, the Secretary-General, the Committee against Torture and other bodies had all ascertained that the Government of Turkey had failed to fulfil its obligation to effectively investigate the fate of Greek-Cypriot missing persons; it must launch an effective investigation into the cases of people whose remains had been identified, as well as people whose fate remained unknown, and must allow unrestricted access to all relevant information in its archives as well as to all relevant areas, including military areas, in Cyprus and in Turkey itself.

33. Another humanitarian issue of grave concern was the living conditions of enclaved persons in the occupied part of Cyprus. Despite some improvements in recent years, Greek and Maronite Cypriots living in the occupied areas were still subject to harassment, restrictions on movement, lack of access to medical care and to education, infringement of property rights and curtailment of their freedom of worship. The widespread destruction and looting of religious and cultural heritage in the occupied areas was a crime not only against Cyprus, but also against all of humanity.

34. Nevertheless, some positive developments had given rise to hope for the peaceful coexistence of the Cypriot people and for a reunited future. Restoration of the Apostolos Andreas monastery, one of the most important religious sites on the island, would begin in the next few months. Also, as an outcome of the interreligious dialogue forum between the Christian and Muslim religious leaders of Cyprus, a senior Muslim cleric had recently held a service at a mosque near the city of Larnaca, while a bishop had been allowed, for the first time in over 18 months, to visit his diocese and a monastery in north-eastern Cyprus.

35. His Government was ready to make renewed efforts at reaching a lasting and viable solution to help reunify the country. For those efforts to succeed, however, violations must cease at once: Turkey must end its occupation, remove its troops and implement and respect the resolutions and recommendations of all relevant United Nations and other international bodies in order to restore peace and security, and the human rights and dignity of all the peoples of Cyprus.

36. **Mr. Rashwan** (Saudi Arabia) said that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had always implemented the

principles of Islam, which enshrined respect for human rights; moreover, it fulfilled its obligations under the five international human rights instruments to which it had acceded. The protection of human rights was ensured in its legislation, including laws on combating human trafficking and protection from abuse, and it had established several national and civil institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as a strong mechanism for monitoring and implementation.

37. Respect for cultural diversity and the cultural rights of nations and peoples, including the Arab and Islamic identity, was of vital importance, as that contributed to the strengthening of the principles and concepts which underpinned human rights and promoted dialogue and commonalities among all peoples and nations. In that respect, he drew attention to the Vienna-based King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, which his Government had co-founded together with Spain and Austria, and which was focused on tolerance, peace and dialogue and on rejecting extremism.

38. His delegation condemned the violence by Israel, the occupying Power, against Palestinians in refugee camps, who were enduring inhumane and cruel treatment. The international community must swiftly take action to address the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and impose a comprehensive, country-wide ceasefire, under United Nations supervision. It must also make concerted efforts to assist the Government of Myanmar in finding peaceful and lasting solutions to the situation of the Muslim minority there, supporting refugees' right of return and granting them the right of citizenship and equal political rights, eliminating all discriminatory practices against that minority and protecting its freedom of religious affiliation.

39. **Mr. Win Naing** (Myanmar) said that his Government was bringing Myanmar's legislation into line with its Constitution and with international instruments. It had established political parties, permitted peaceful assembly and association, enabled freedom of expression and granted amnesties to foster national reconciliation, and it aimed to free all prisoners of conscience by the end of 2013. It had concluded ceasefire agreements with almost all of the country's armed ethnic groups, paving the way for a nationwide ceasefire. Its economic reforms were focused on macroeconomic stabilization, poverty

alleviation, increased investment, job creation, the sustainable use of natural resources, the green economy and green growth.

40. Myanmar was a multi-ethnic country in which many religions flourished and freedom of worship was guaranteed under the Constitution. His Government was implementing the recommendations of the Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State to resolve intercommunal tension and was conducting interfaith dialogues to promote peaceful coexistence.

41. Although his Government had received eight visits from the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, it believed that the Human Rights Council's universal periodic review was the sole means of addressing human rights situations. It had established a National Human Rights Commission to address allegations of violations. The Commission, whose functions would shortly be expanded through an act of parliament, was working at the regional level with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. His Government was also engaging bilaterally on human rights issues with the United States, Japan and the European Union, and was negotiating with OHCHR for the provision of technical assistance. It had made progress in addressing the issue of underage soldiers since the signature of a joint plan of action with the United Nations in June 2012, and had invited a delegation of the working group established pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) to Myanmar in November 2013.

42. In recognition of the improved human rights situation in Myanmar, the country-specific mandates imposed by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council should be terminated.

43. **Mr. Iakovidis** (Greece) said that the human rights violations in Cyprus resulting from the 1974 Turkish invasion and continued occupation had not yet been addressed, despite many United Nations resolutions.

44. The question of missing persons was of particular significance to his Government, since 64 of its citizens were among the missing. Although it hoped for progress from the bi-communal Committee on Missing Persons, it felt that Turkey should launch an investigation of the matter, as required by the 2001 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, and

allow access to Turkish military archives and to military zones in the occupied part of Cyprus.

45. Turkey was preventing almost 200,000 displaced Greek Cypriots from returning to their homes, many of which had been illegally sold. The influx of Turkish settlers into the occupied area was continuing, with the aim of changing Cyprus's demographic composition in breach of the Geneva Conventions. The numbers of enclaved Greek Cypriots in the occupied area had dwindled to fewer than 500 and their human rights, including property and inheritance rights, were not being respected.

46. The cultural and religious heritage of occupied Cyprus was being destroyed, with many religious buildings pillaged, damaged, demolished or converted to other purposes, and thousands of artefacts smuggled abroad.

47. The intercommunal negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General's good offices mission were the only way to settle the problem, in accordance with Security Council resolutions and the principles of the European Union. He hoped that Turkey would finally end its illegal occupation and redress its human rights record in Cyprus.

48. **Ms. Lalic Smajevic** (Serbia) said that her Government attached great importance to minority rights, in particular the right of minorities in Serbia to use their own language, which was a precondition for the enjoyment of many other rights. Serbian communities in other countries in the region should also enjoy the right to their own language and to the Cyrillic script.

49. Her Government had received the visits of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in June 2013 and of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons in October 2013. It had accepted almost all of the recommendations made pursuant to its second universal periodic review, conducted in January 2013. It attached great importance to the rights of the Roma and had taken steps for their inclusion, the promotion of their status and the prevention of discrimination against them. It had made efforts to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation, and had organized conferences, workshops, theatrical performances and film screenings during pride week in September 2013, but had not held a pride parade for security reasons.

50. The human rights situation in Kosovo and Metohija remained difficult. During her June 2013 visit, the High Commissioner had emphasized the need to adopt or amend legislation in line with international human rights standards and to improve protection against discrimination, including hate speech. Her Government shared the High Commissioner's concerns over the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the length of legal proceedings and the lack of witness protection and enforcement of court decisions, which were leading to a loss of trust in the judicial system among Serbs and other non-Albanians. The evidence that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo had collected on crimes committed in Kosovo and Metohija had been destroyed by arson attacks in summer 2013. Such developments hindered investigations into the fate of missing persons and into the allegations regarding human organ trafficking made by the rapporteur of the Council of Europe Committee of Legal Affairs and Human Rights in 2010. Justice had not yet been done to the Serbian victims of massacres in July 1999 and March 2004.

51. The right to participate in elections was essential to democratic societies. The attempt by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo and Metohija to prevent internally displaced persons from participating in the elections planned for November 2013 would, if successful, vitiate the results. The daily attacks to which Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija were subjected made normal life impossible and testified to a systemic problem.

52. Her Government maintained dialogue with Priština in the interests of finding a sustainable solution for the enjoyment of human rights by all communities in Kosovo and Metohija. Unilateral acts, however, did not contribute to the peaceful settlement of disputes and her Government would not therefore recognize the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo.

53. **Mr. Ri Tong Il** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his Government condemned the invasion of sovereign States and slaughter of civilians by Western countries, including the United States, under the pretext of the "war on terror". Those countries fostered social instability by interfering in the internal affairs of States with different ideologies and social systems and instigating armed conflicts to overthrow legitimate Governments. They levelled groundless and politically motivated accusations

against individual developing countries, harming dialogue and cooperation in human rights. In an attempt to impose their own values, they adopted so-called human rights resolutions targeting developing countries, a clear example of politicization, selectivity and double standards, since it was in reality Western countries which were principally responsible for human rights abuses. They should attend to their own domestic situation before criticizing the human rights record of other countries.

54. Amends must be made for past human rights violations. Japan had committed extraordinary crimes against humanity during its occupation of Korea in the twentieth century, forcibly drafting and abducting 8.4 million Koreans, massacring 1 million and condemning 20,000 women to sexual slavery. However, the Japanese Government had persistently refused to admit its crimes and even glorified its history of aggression. His delegation urged it to resolve the situation.

55. His Government promoted human rights in line with Juche precepts and continuously endeavoured to promote its people's welfare despite constant political and economic pressure and military threats. It would continue to strive for economic development and better living standards for its people, thus upholding their human rights and fulfilling its international obligations.

56. **Ms. Dávila Dávila** (Colombia), said that her Government was pursuing a comprehensive policy on human rights and international humanitarian law, which had been incorporated into its national development plan for 2010-2014. It was according special attention to victims of internal armed conflict and to land restitution and had enacted a law in 2011 which had helped hundreds of thousands of people affected by violence and internal armed conflict; many victims had received compensation and were being assisted in rebuilding their lives, plans had been drawn up for individual and collective reparations and all the municipal and national transitional justice committees had been established. As part of the land restitution process, her Government provided debt and tax relief, support for productive activities and housing subsidies, including assistance for indigenous communities and people of African descent. It also provided emergency protection to persons who were at risk because of their involvement in the land restitution process. A national protection unit had been created to protect human rights defenders, including trade unionists, members of

human rights organizations, representatives of victims, civil society and farmers, and members of ethnic groups.

57. Her Government had adopted measures to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers by illegal armed groups, prosecute the perpetrators and provide protection and redress to children and adolescents who had been separated from such groups. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute supported those children by restoring their rights and helping them reintegrate into society, and the Intersectoral Commission for the prevention of recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups worked to prevent recruitment, identify areas where it was most prevalent and combat sexual violence.

58. Over the previous two years, under its comprehensive policy on human rights and international humanitarian law, her Government had significantly reduced poverty, introduced free universal preschool, primary and secondary education and organized human rights training programmes for members of the military and the police.

59. Colombia was willing to share its good practices and experiences with other States. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Government had agreed to extend the current mandate of the OHCHR office in Colombia by one year, beginning on 1 November 2013, to reinforce Colombia's activities in the field of human rights.

60. **Ms. Ntaba** (Zimbabwe) said that her Government had put in place a number of independent institutions, constitutional safeguards and policy frameworks aimed at promoting and protecting the human rights of its citizens: Its new Constitution was people-driven and comprehensively guaranteed human rights, including all economic, social and cultural rights. It also had a land reform programme and an indigenization and economic empowerment policy. However, her Government's efforts to enhance its citizens' economic well-being, through land reform and economic empowerment programmes, were being impeded by the illegal economic sanctions imposed by some Western countries. Her Government reiterated its call for the immediate and unconditional lifting of those sanctions.

61. The promotion and protection of human rights was first and foremost the sovereign responsibility of States, which should determine their own policy in that regard. The international community should provide

assistance only at the request of the country concerned. Human rights should not be exploited as a cover for interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, as no country had the moral authority to condemn human rights challenges faced elsewhere. Nor should human rights be used as propaganda or a political tool to vilify other countries while pursuing selfish interests which undermined the targeted States' national interests. Instead, human rights should be promoted and protected through constructive dialogue and genuine cooperation based on respect for State sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, non-selectivity and impartiality.

62. The trend of expanding the concept of human rights, without the concurrence of Member States, as well as the trend towards reinterpreting existing human rights instruments far beyond the meaning intended by their original drafters and by the ratifying countries, was of deep concern. Her delegation rejected attempts to promote new classes of rights that had no international legal standing. It noted with deep concern that United Nations human rights mechanisms were increasingly falling prey to the influence of some international human rights movements which were supported and well-funded by pressure groups whose interests were at odds with the great majority of people, particularly in developing countries. The legitimacy of those human rights mechanisms was at stake.

63. All human rights, including the right to development, were universal, indivisible, interrelated, equal and interdependent. The Committee was exhibiting boundless energy in promoting civil and political rights, but its attention to enhancing the economic, social and cultural rights of people was woefully inadequate. There must be a connection between the Committee's work and the needs of the people, especially the poor and their communities, which were plagued by unemployment, disease, crime and despair. The Committee should uphold the right to economic development and prosperity of all people in order to help them to become productive and self-reliant. Placing economic, social and cultural rights on par with civil and political rights did not undermine people's individual rights, as some claimed; her Government firmly believed that economic rights were human rights, and were essential to human welfare.

64. International efforts to promote and protect human rights must uphold people's right to culture by paying special attention to cultural specificities in

different parts of the world. The promotion of human rights should in no way lead to a decline of multiculturalism; the right to culture was vital for the celebration and protection of the traditions and creativity of humankind. Under international human rights law, moreover, Governments had the primary obligation to promote and preserve their citizens' cultural values. Zimbabwe remained firmly committed to the promotion and protection of all human rights of its citizens, and would welcome international cooperation to that end.

65. **Mr. Eler** (Turkey) said that the situation across the border in the Syrian Arab Republic was regrettable and unacceptable. Various reports of the United Nations and other entities had depicted the deplorable human rights violations there, including the continued use of indiscriminate firepower by the Syrian authorities, widespread attacks against civilians, obstruction and arbitrary denial of humanitarian assistance, arbitrary detentions, and deaths in custody. In spite of numerous calls to correct that situation, current reports indicated that thousands of civilians remained under siege. The brutality of the authorities against its citizens had grown exponentially at every stage of the crisis. Sadly, it had included the use of weapons of mass destruction.

66. The Committee's repeated condemnations of those large-scale human rights violations was vital in order to keep a focus on the unacceptable humanitarian situation created by the Syrian regime and its affiliated militia. Turkey was one of the nations that genuinely supported the Syrian people in their struggle to fulfil their legitimate aspirations for a democratic and pluralistic society, where respect for and observance of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law prevailed.

67. **Mr. Manano** (Uganda) said that his Government had policies and programmes in place to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights. Those included constitutional provisions for the protection of individual freedoms such as collective bargaining, with a view to improving working conditions, and participation in democratic governance through periodic elections, under a system of multiparty democracy set up in 2005. It had established a national human rights commission in 1997 to monitor the human rights situation in the country; victims could bring violations before it or the regular courts, and it could order the release of detainees and the payment of

compensation to victims among other legal and administrative remedies. His Government had also created an independent and impartial judicial system to promote the rule of law and protect the rights of individuals. In 2005, it had enacted a law on access to information, which had led to the establishment of more than 100 private FM radio stations, 10 print media, and 22 television broadcasting stations.

68. All human rights were interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Respect for the individual facilitated the enjoyment of all human rights, and promoted development. In that respect, his Government was implementing policies and programmes, with input from various stakeholders, including programmes for the vulnerable and marginalized. Those policies and programmes had contributed to steady economic growth over the past 20 years and had helped to reduce overall levels of poverty throughout Uganda. His Government was committed to formulating and implementing new policies and measures to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights for its people.

69. **Mr. Eshragh Jahromi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that cultural diversity was essential to the advancement and welfare of humanity, and should be valued and accepted, as it helped to foster creativity, dynamism, social justice, tolerance, mutual understanding and international peace. In that respect, the biannual resolution of the Non-Aligned Movement, entitled "Human rights and cultural diversity", would set the stage for constructive dialogue on what was required in order to benefit from different cultural heritages in promoting the universality of human rights. To curb the growing trends of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in the world and foster harmony, the international community should seriously take into consideration not only religious and national particularities, but also cultural diversity.

70. Although all human rights were universal, indivisible, interdependent and equal, the existing international order continued to be dominated by selectivity and economic and political exploitation. Political considerations could not impede the promotion and protection of human rights. Despite repeated assertions regarding the holistic nature of all human rights, undue emphasis had been placed on civil and political rights; efforts should be made to combat deprivation of economic, social and cultural rights,

backed by a sense of solidarity with the underprivileged and a willingness to undertake concrete action.

71. Development was a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which must be mainstreamed into the work of the United Nations. Despite the efforts made, development remained a distant goal, with persistent implementation gaps and many unfulfilled commitments, clearly reflecting the need for stronger political will and a new legally binding instrument which would require developed countries to provide sustained financial support and transfer technology. While it was the responsibility of States to promote the right to development, international cooperation was essential for its genuine realization.

72. Unilaterally imposed measures and economic and financial sanctions should not be used as tools for political coercion; under no circumstances should people be deprived of their means of subsistence and development. In that respect, he welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on unilateral coercive measures (A/68/211), and supported the request of the Human Rights Council that OHCHR should organize a workshop on the impact of the application of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights by affected populations, in particular their socioeconomic impacts on women and children in the targeted States.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.