



General Assembly

Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
20 October 2014

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 7 October 2014, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Mesquita Borges (Timor-Leste)

Contents

Organization of work

Agenda item 26: Social development

- (a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly
- (b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family
- (c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing
- (d) Literacy for life: shaping future agendas

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>).

14-62181 (E)



Please recycle The recycling symbol, consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Organization of work (A/69/250, A/C.3/69/1, A/C.3/69/L.1/Rev.1 and A/C.3/69/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1)

1. **The Chair** said that the letter from the President of the General Assembly concerning the allocation of agenda items to the Committee was contained in document A/C.3/69/1. The list of documents issued under each agenda item was contained in document A/C.3/69/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1. She drew attention to the guidelines concerning the conduct of work set forth in the report of the General Committee (A/69/250).

2. She took it that the Committee wished to approve the organization of work as contained in documents A/C.3/69/L.1 and A/C.3/69/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. **The Chair** said that she took it that, following past practice, the Committee wished to extend invitations to special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council, chairs of treaty bodies or working groups and other experts, to submit their reports to the Committee.

5. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 26: Social development

- (a) **Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly** (A/69/157)
- (b) **Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family** (A/69/61-E/2014/4 and A/69/187)
- (c) **Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing** (A/69/180)
- (d) **Literacy for life: shaping future agendas** (A/69/183)

6. **Mr. Gonnot** (Chief, Social Integration Branch of the Social Policy and Development Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General under agenda item 26 (a), (b) and (c), said that the report on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth

special session of the General Assembly (A/69/157) provided an overview of the discussions of the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-second session, which had focused on the priority theme of promoting the empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all and also addressed the special needs of Africa and the least developed countries. The report discussed policies and strategies for the achievement of inclusive and sustainable development and highlighted the role of Governments in creating an environment conducive to empowerment through policies to equalize opportunities and targeted measures to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized. Furthermore, it underlined the importance of understanding the social drivers behind development outcomes and the need to broaden the scope of social policy so as to steer social drivers towards social justice, inclusive and equitable economic growth and environmental sustainability. The report recommended that Member States should strive to enhance policy coherence and coordination across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

7. The report on the preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in 2014 (A/69/61-E/2014/4) contained examples of family-oriented policies and programmes implemented by Governments and regional and civil society initiatives. It emphasized that making families the focus of social development efforts was an effective way to tackle such persistent development challenges as the intergenerational transfer of poverty and inequality. Changing family structures and growing family instability necessitated urgent action for sustainable livelihoods and better work-family balance. The report concluded that adding a family perspective to the post-2015 development agenda would contribute to empowerment, inequality reduction and sustainable development, and recommended that Member States should consider appropriate ways to advance the family agenda in a coordinated and systematic way within international forums.

8. The report entitled "Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond" (A/69/187) set forth options for consideration by the General Assembly to review

progress and promote the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/3, such as including measurable targets and indicators for disability in post-2015 development frameworks, instituting a periodic global report on disability and development, instigating a systematic review to evaluate and monitor the progress of current mainstreaming efforts by all stakeholders and establishing a coordination mechanism within the United Nations system to address gaps and effectively respond to needs for technical assistance, including capacity-building.

9. The report on the follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/69/180) focused on two critical issues identified by Member States during the second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and at various sessions of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, namely, age-based discrimination and neglect, abuse and violence. The report also provided an update on recent regional policy developments, publications and civil society initiatives.

10. **Mr. Ilapavuluri** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), introducing the report of the Director-General of the UNESCO entitled “Literacy for life: shaping future agendas”, submitted under agenda item 26 (d), said that UNESCO, as the coordinator and catalyst for intensified collective efforts to promote literacy, had sustained and planned to expand the gains made during the United Nations Literacy Decade. The Decade had promoted an expanded vision of literacy as a foundation for lifelong learning and as a development imperative.

11. Over the previous two decades, the absolute number of non-literate adults had fallen and adult literacy rates had risen steadily. However, progress had been uneven across regions and countries, with three quarters of the 781 million adult illiterates hailing from South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, women still constituted two thirds of the world’s non-literate population, a proportion that had remained unchanged during that time. Even high-income countries faced literacy challenges. With regard to children, some 58 million children of primary and 63 million children of lower secondary school age had not been enrolled in school in 2012, and an estimated 250 million children of primary school age were failing

to acquire basic reading, writing and mathematics skills.

12. The report stressed that meeting the multiple literacy needs of all age groups was central to building a peaceful, inclusive world. To that end, a sustainable international commitment was required. The report identified five strategic axes for UNESCO action on the global literacy agenda and called on countries, development partners, specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system and civil society to promote literacy and literate environments. It recommended that Member States should integrate literacy into the post-2015 global development and education agenda.

13. **Ms. Sabja** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that despite significant progress in a number of areas, much more needed to be done to achieve the shared goals in the field of social development. There was a need for synergy between empowerment policies, on the one hand, and the ongoing work on the social pillar of the Rio+20 outcomes and on developing the post-2015 development agenda, on the other. In order to meet the needs and aspirations of all members of society, an empowering approach would require comprehensive strategies and policy frameworks that went beyond group-specific approaches. Furthermore, supportive national institutional structures and participatory mechanisms were needed, and the United Nations system should be prepared to assist Member States in that regard. The Group of 77 and China reaffirmed its commitment to implementing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and other social development initiatives adopted by the General Assembly, including the Millennium Development Goals. It encouraged all Member States and relevant stakeholders to promote and undertake appropriate activities in the coming year to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development.

14. Poverty was a complex economic and social phenomenon that could not be solved through economic growth alone. People must be placed at the centre of development, and action must be taken to foster inclusive growth and social protection. In that context, the Group of 77 and China expressed grave concern about the constraints placed on the fight against poverty by current global crises, in particular the financial and economic crisis, the food crisis and

continuing food insecurity, the energy crisis and the challenges posed by climate change. In the light of those continuing challenges, implementation of the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development was more urgent than ever. In compliance with their obligations under international law, States should take further collective action to remove all obstacles to the full realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, particularly those living under colonial domination and foreign occupation.

15. International cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation, was crucial to the realization of internationally agreed development goals. The Group of 77 and China called for timely fulfilment by developed countries of their commitments with regard to official development assistance and the global partnership for development. A harmonized trade agenda should support measures for equal market access, in accordance with other multilateral agreements, such as the Enhanced Integrated Framework of the World Trade Organization.

16. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the continued focus on young people and called upon Member States, the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders to implement fully the recommendations contained in the outcome document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding. The Group also acknowledged the contribution of the BYND 2015 Global Youth Summit, held in September 2013, to discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. The observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family would provide a useful opportunity to strengthen national family-centred policies and programmes. As population ageing continued the international community must place its response to that emerging reality in the context of poverty eradication efforts. In that regard, the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was crucial to ensuring the exercise by older persons of all human rights and promoting their well-being.

17. **Mr. Gass** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said that collective action must be taken to address the global challenges in the social and humanitarian sphere. With deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda underway, there

was general agreement that people must be at the centre of development and that no one, of any age or background, with or without disability, should be left behind. The post-2015 sustainable development goals should integrate social, economic and environmental realities and bring attention to the principles of social justice and inclusion. Inclusive societies that respected diversity were fundamental to overcoming the barriers to sustainable development.

18. Progress had been made towards realizing the vision of just, equitable and inclusive development. The world continued to make tremendous progress in combating extreme poverty and in areas such as primary school enrolment, disease prevention, drinking water and increasing women's political participation. It had become clear that investment in human capital, agricultural productivity, job creation and active labour market policies were proven means to achieve sustainable growth; building and strengthening inclusive institutions fostered participation, people's empowerment and social inclusion. Much of the progress made had been built on past commitments, which remained integral to moving development forward in an inclusive, equitable and sustainable manner.

19. Solidarity, equality and equity, and the full participation in society of all people, were essential to the achievement of sustainable development and stable, safe and just societies. The reaffirmation by Member States, at the recent World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, of their commitment to collaborate with indigenous peoples with a view to promoting and protecting their rights, was a testament to the international community's desire to recalibrate social issues within the new context of sustainable development. The outcome of the Committee's work at the current session would be instrumental in guiding the 2015-2016 review and policy cycle of the Commission for Social Development.

20. **Mr. Msosa** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that although Africa had made significant strides in certain areas of social and economic development over the past decade, critical challenges remained in such areas as education, health and access to basic social services. The African Group therefore believed - that poverty eradication should be the overarching priority of the post-2015 development agenda. The African Union Common Position reiterated the need to empower all people, including

those living in vulnerable situations, through inclusive growth and through measures that ensured that no individual remained below the poverty line.

21. The African Union had adopted a plan of action on the family, in the belief that the family remained a fundamental nucleus in African societies and played a critical role in mending the social fabric within communities. Efforts would continue to relieve the plight of the members of every African family, particularly women and girls living in poverty. Similar efforts to address the challenges presented by an ageing population had yielded the African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing and the draft protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa. In that regard, advocacy efforts should aim at improving the fulfilment of relevant obligations and encouraging appropriate consultations with older people in those processes, and should also ensure the allocation of resources for the implementation of commitments.

22. In November 2012, as a follow-up to the 2012 evaluation of the first African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 1999-2009, and the Continental Plan of Action, the African Union Disability Architecture had been adopted. However, evaluations of progress achieved by member States towards the implementation of the Continental Plan of Action had revealed that an insignificant proportion of persons with disabilities had access to care, rehabilitation and education and that many persons with severe disabilities did not survive because of lack of supportive services and resources.

23. In order to promote youth development and empowerment, the African Union had adopted the African Youth Charter in 2006 and a plan of action for the African Youth Decade, 2009-2018. Nonetheless, critical unemployment and underemployment challenges remained among African youth. Moreover, although enrolment in higher education had tripled in recent years, universities were still teaching institutions as opposed to the research centres necessary to maintain competitiveness at the global level. Furthermore, existing technical and vocational education and training programmes were inadequate and underfunded and were unable to absorb the large numbers of early school leavers.

24. The adoption, in 2002, of the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, a mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution, provided a robust and proactive framework for promoting peace and security in the African continent, while the Abuja Declaration and Plan of Action on HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Other Related Infectious Diseases, adopted in April 2001, sought to address pandemics. The African Group was committed to improving domestic investment in health as a mechanism to strengthen health systems in their countries.

25. The African Group welcomed the international community's support to countries grappling with the Ebola crisis, and the two resolutions adopted by the Security Council and General Assembly in September 2014. However, although the desire to protect was an appropriate response, it should not result in the isolation and stigmatization of afflicted persons or of countries impacted by the crisis. Instead, increased attention should be given to post-conflict reconstruction and socioeconomic development efforts in the affected countries.

26. Comprehensive strategies and group-specific approaches to empower the family, individuals and communities should be taken to ensure they were active agents in the achievement of inclusive and sustainable development. Efforts should be scaled up towards social protection for all, with an emphasis on the vulnerable, through an integrated and multi-sectoral approach to accelerate social integration and inclusion. The African Group was committed to promoting social development and reducing inequalities among people in Africa and appealed to the international community and relevant partners to continue to support those efforts.

27. **Mr. Mendoza-Garcia** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that CELAC was deeply committed to promoting social inclusion and integration as one of the three basic pillars of social development, together with poverty eradication and full employment. The eradication of hunger and poverty would require inclusive and integrated development strategies designed to achieve a more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth and improve access to basic services.

28. International cooperation, in particular official development assistance, South-South cooperation and technical cooperation were essential to development. Reforms of the financial and economic system were also urgently needed. Based on the fundamental principle of national ownership, new forms of international cooperation and solidarity in support of national efforts should be developed. The CELAC countries had successfully implemented programmes designed to promote social inclusion and the empowerment and participation of vulnerable and marginalized persons, demonstrating that political will could yield positive outcomes despite limited resources. They continued to pursue various policies for promoting comprehensive social development, encouraging economic growth, spurring job creation and enhancing existing programmes and strategies to combat poverty domestically.

29. The CELAC countries believed that young people should be given adequate educational opportunities and training, as their participation in education programmes at all levels was crucial to the building of more inclusive and prosperous societies. CELAC was concerned about the rapid ageing of the population in the developing world and actively promoted the inclusion of older persons in society through expanded social strategies. The international community should pay more attention to the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons, step up implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing at all levels, and consider the feasibility of an international convention for the protection and promotion of the rights of older persons. The CELAC countries were actively promoting the full inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and welcomed the appointment of the Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility.

30. The international community should address the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases, which displayed a clear link to poverty and posed a serious threat to the socioeconomic development of developing countries. In that connection, CELAC welcomed the outcome document of the July 2014 High-Level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases and the inclusion in the sustainable development goals of a commitment to reduce premature mortality caused by non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment.

31. The post-2015 development agenda should be built on the foundation of the Millennium Development Goals, and all aspects of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development should be properly integrated in the new development framework. It was important to recall that culture was crucial to sustainable development and contributed to poverty eradication, the reduction of social inequalities, the expansion of employment opportunities and social inclusion, all of which would help bring about more equitable societies.

32. **Mr. Rahming** (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that for small island developing States, one of the main challenges was climate change, which, as reiterated in the outcome document adopted at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, posed a serious threat to territorial integrity, viability and survival and undermined efforts to achieve sustainable development goals. Accordingly, the priorities of those States should be incorporated into the post-2015 development agenda, which should in turn be mainstreamed into all levels of sustainable development. CARICOM welcomed the development of the climate impact assessment model by the Caribbean subregional headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. That tool, which was used to assess the social and economic consequences of climate change, further validated the economic and social vulnerabilities faced by small island developing States.

33. The CARICOM Governments continued to develop modalities to address the social development needs of the people of the region. In July 2014 they had adopted a comprehensive strategic plan for 2015-2019. A Commission on Human Resource Development had been established and, in November 2014, would undertake a comprehensive review of education and human resource development in the region. A CARICOM declaration on the post-2015 international development agenda had been adopted and, in August 2014, the CARICOM Ministerial Committee on Human and Social Development had approved a strategy and plan, developed in conjunction with the United Nations Population Fund to reduce adolescent pregnancies in the region over the period of 2014-2019.

34. The implementation of the successful Youth Development Action Plan, which helped to guide

national youth-related policy, planning and action, would continue. In January 2014, the Secretary-General of CARICOM had conducted a social media interaction, affording youth across the region the opportunity to share their views on the issues that affected them, and to familiarize themselves with the work of CARICOM, preceded by a youth forum which had developed environmentally friendly educational materials. The Caribbean Youth Ambassador Programme enabled young people to engage in the decision-making process and participate in sustainable development, and included programmes designed to reduce youth on youth violence. CARICOM was mindful of the challenges faced by older persons and had adopted the Caribbean Charter on Health and Ageing as a coordinated approach to ensuring the health and full integration and participation of older persons in Caribbean societies and economies and facilitating supportive environments, health care, economic security, and employment and other productive activities for healthy ageing.

35. CARICOM strongly supported the outcome document of the September 2013 High-level meeting of the General Assembly on disability and development. It would continue to support the work of the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development. In December 2013, CARICOM had convened a High-level Ministerial Meeting on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Caribbean, the resulting declaration of which had called for enhanced national and regional policies to strengthen legislative frameworks promoting social services for and the protection of persons with disabilities.

36. **Mr. Haniff** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN was pursuing its efforts for the establishment of a people-centred, economically integrated, culturally harmonious and socially responsible Community by 2015 through the advancement of social welfare and protection, social justice and rights, and human development. It welcomed the continued focus of the Commission for Social Development on promoting the empowerment of people to achieve poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all and, at the regional level, it was advocating community empowerment in pursuit of balanced growth and inclusive development. It supported the view that improved efforts should be made to address

the root causes of poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

37. ASEAN was committed to promoting social justice and mainstreaming people's rights into its policies and all spheres of life; protection of the rights of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups was central to the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, as well as the Strategic Framework on Social Welfare and Development (2011-2015). ASEAN had also proclaimed the ASEAN Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2011-2020, and had adopted the Bali Declaration on the Enhancement of the Role and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in ASEAN Community. The ASEAN Programme Evaluation and Planning Conference for Persons with Disabilities, which had discussed mechanisms to develop the capacity of Governments to provide social services for persons with disabilities through technical cooperation among ASEAN member States, had been held in April 2014.

38. With regard to social protection for older persons, the 11th ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies had been held in December 2013 in Tokyo. Several recommendations had emerged from that meeting, such as the need to reorient and build systems to support older persons in their communities and in the context of growing urbanization. The 12th meeting, with the theme "resilient communities with active ageing" would be held in October 2014 in Tokyo.

39. Social protection was a cross-cutting issue that required close collaboration between Governments and the private sector, development partners, civil society, service providers, and other relevant stakeholders. In September 2014, recognizing the importance of stable development programmes, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council had endorsed five central elements with a view to their incorporation in the ASEAN post-2015 vision.

40. The biennial ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth continued to be a platform for discussion of the role of younger generations in boosting regional solidarity. The region's youth were active participants in ASEAN-related meetings, including the May 2014 ASEAN Summit. To further instil a sense of community, an ASEAN Youth Volunteer Program and other volunteer initiatives had been established. During the inaugural programme, 97 volunteers from the 10 Member States had been recruited.

41. **Mr. Ntwaagae** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the SADC15-year Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan were in line with the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development but faced significant challenges in respect of implementation. In particular, limited capacity and a severe lack of funds were hindering efforts undertaken by SADC member States to stimulate economic development in the region. In that respect, SADC welcomed the recommendation contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/187) for the establishment of a coordinating mechanism within the United Nations system that would effectively respond to needs for technical assistance, including for capacity-building, bearing in mind that the combined assistance of the United Nations and international development partners was required to enable SADC countries to implement social development policies and programmes and achieve internationally agreed development goals.

42. Poverty eradication, which remained the greatest challenge in the region, had registered steady but limited progress over the past decade, but further progress was being impeded by the ongoing global financial and economic crises, food insecurity and climate change. SADC was therefore redoubling its efforts to implement the Plan of Action of the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security.

43. While increased access to anti-retroviral drugs had contributed to a decline in HIV/AIDS mortality, the high cost of the drugs continued to be unsustainable and the capacity of the health-care sector limited. SADC was continuing to engage its international partners to find a solution to those problems.

44. Unemployment, particularly of youth, was an ongoing challenge in a region in which youth accounted for an increasingly significant portion of the population. While targeted efforts had focused predominantly on improving the accessibility and quality of education, the capacity of SADC countries to employ adequately skilled youth remained limited, a challenge that those countries were addressing by promoting economic development through the mobilization of natural resources, a theme that had been the focus of the 34th ordinary summit of SADC, held in August 2014.

45. **Mr. Mayr-Harting** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, said that, despite progress made toward economic recovery in European Union member States, the legacy of the global financial and economic crisis continued to hamper growth. To address the unacceptably high unemployment levels, particularly of youth, the European Union had announced an ambitious Jobs, Growth and Investment Package as a central pillar of its policy over the next five years, supplementing its 10-year comprehensive Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and its Youth Guarantee. It had likewise proposed an Employment Package, a Youth Employment Package and a Social Investment Package to provide guidance on the national reforms that were needed to meet commitments to the Europe 2020 targets.

46. While the goal of halving the rate of extreme poverty had been met five years ahead of the 2015 deadline, chronic poverty, which affected women disproportionately, remained a pressing challenge. Efforts to achieve the remaining Millennium Development Goals must therefore be intensified, on the basis of stronger global partnerships. The post-2015 development agenda must be people-centred and should prioritize good governance and the promotion of peaceful societies. In that respect, the reports of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing provided a useful basis for the development of that framework, integrating in a balanced manner the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development. The European Union would engage in the discussion on means of implementation of the post-2015 agenda, including financing. That agenda should ensure a rights-based approach encompassing all human rights.

47. The European Union reaffirmed its support for the principles and objectives of the Programme of Action adopted by International Conference on Population and Development, which should be carried forward in the formulation of the post-2015 agenda and sustainable development goals. It continued to promote gender equality in all its policies with particular

emphasis on equal economic independence, equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, equality in decision-making, dignity, integrity and the suppression of gender-based violence. It closely monitored fulfilment of the commitments made under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and welcomed the corresponding review process.

48. Drawing upon its own best practices and those defined by the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the European Union sought to place youth unemployment and youth-related challenges at the centre of the global agenda. It would continue to monitor progress within the Europe 2020 framework and make youth a focal point of international cooperation initiatives.

49. While European Union member States were actively promoting the rights of older persons to social protection and access to health and social services, they needed to take further steps to address, inter alia, age discrimination, decent work availability, social protection and prevention of elder abuse. The European Union's commitment to the protection of older persons from a human rights perspective was reflected in a side event it had hosted on that theme in the context of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing.

50. As a Party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the European Union continued to implement its European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, which included a focus on external action, in order to remove social and economic barriers faced by those persons.

51. **Mr. Lambertini** (Italy) said that social development was a timely concern in the aftermath of the global financial and economic crisis. Inclusive and sustainable development could not take place without the full participation of all persons, including those with disabilities. Italy had established a national observatory on the status of persons with disabilities and, in 2013, had developed a biennial action plan that contained specific measures to protect persons with disabilities in developing partner countries, particularly in the context of humanitarian emergencies. Italy had also undertaken a series of international cooperation projects to promote the empowerment of persons with disabilities and welcomed the inclusion of disability concerns in the proposals of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. It was committed

to ensuring that those goals were included in the post-2015 development agenda.

52. Youth unemployment was hindering development and recovery from the financial and economic crisis in many countries in Europe and the world. Italy would continue to cooperate with the World Programme of Action for Youth to develop new approaches to youth empowerment. At the same time, a truly inclusive society could not exclude older persons, who should be viewed as an asset rather than a burden to society; collective efforts must be made to guarantee their human rights and social integration.

53. The commitments made under the Beijing Platform for Action must be implemented, as gender equality was central to the achievement of all social development goals. In September 2014, together with Ghana, Italy had organized a high-level ministerial event on food security and women's empowerment that had focused on the connection between gender equality and food security, a link that would be explored further at the 2015 World Expo in Milan. Italy attached great importance to the role of the family as a national legal institution and a dynamic player in the development process. It recognized the needs of non-traditional couples and families and was strongly committed to adopting measures to sustain the family and the needs and rights of all family members.

54. *Ms. Nilsson (Sweden), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

55. **Ms. Robl** (United States of America) said that the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, which presented an unprecedented opportunity for the international community to articulate clear, ambitious and measurable goals to advance global priorities, must focus on the needs of the most vulnerable groups and tackle the issues of poverty, hunger, health and resilience. Women, youth, older persons and members of other at-risk groups, including persons with disabilities, should contribute to development and share in its benefits.

56. The United States had worked with the United Nations, Member States and civil society to call attention and develop responses to elder abuse, the scope and pervasiveness of which was often underestimated due to underreporting. It had hosted a first-of-its kind panel discussion at the twenty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council that had addressed the multiple forms of abuse faced by older persons and had reviewed efforts by the United Nations

to prevent and respond to that phenomenon and its public health consequences and promote public education efforts.

57. With regard to disability, the United States supported the principle of leaving no one behind. It was committed to using development assistance to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, and had established two high-level national positions to ensure that disability concerns were taken into account in foreign assistance and development programmes and that responses to international humanitarian emergencies addressed the needs of persons with disabilities.

58. Improving access to quality education, particularly for girls, including literacy in the early years, was the key to eradicating poverty and promoting economic, social and political development. The United States was contributing to that effort through bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes in support of literacy, education in times of conflict and crisis, workforce development and global citizenship initiatives to promote education for all.

59. The United States welcomed the exchanges that had taken place during the panel discussion held at the twenty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council on the protection of the family and its members, and the recognition of the capacity of various forms of the family to provide a nurturing environment. It was essential to uphold the human rights of all individuals in all families and to promote the principles of non-discrimination, inclusion and diversity.

60. **Mr. Rakovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation advocated the further formulation of concrete measures to achieve the social development goals established by the United Nations, focusing on the problems of vulnerable groups of the population. It supported the focus on poverty eradication, social integration, full employment and decent work for all, and the links established between social development, security and human rights and remained committed to the full development of human potential, reduction of poverty and inequality, and enhancement of the standard of living of the population. His Government was continuing to provide state assistance for employment, thereby raising productivity and the quality of work, and stimulating small and medium-sized enterprises. By 2020 it planned to create and modernize 25 million high-tech workplaces, which

would lead to a doubling of labour productivity. It supported the strategy of the International Labour Organization on employment and social protection.

61. Following its adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012, the Russian Federation had accelerated its work on ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in the exercise of all categories of rights and freedoms. His Government and non-governmental disability organizations were concentrating particularly on the implementation throughout the Russian Federation of the “Accessible environment” programme for 2011-2015 aimed at creating barrier-free living conditions for persons with disabilities.

62. Older persons comprised 23 per cent of the population of the Russian Federation, and that figure was expected to increase to 30 per cent by 2030. The scope and quality of support for older persons therefore needed to be expanded. Active efforts were underway to improve financial and material support, medical care and social services. In that regard, his Government was guided by the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

63. In line with the World Programme of Action for Youth, with its focus on job placement and stable employment, the Russian Federation continued to provide various forms of state support to young people, including housing subsidies. It sought to foster civic responsibility, tolerance, moral values, ethnic and religious tolerance and the ideals of peace and friendship between nations among young people. It attached particular importance to strengthening the functions of the family, solidarity between generations and upholding traditional family and moral values and believed that the stability and well-being of the traditional family was one of the main prerequisites for ensuring social stability and long-term sustainable development.

64. In seeking the optimal balance between social development and sustainable economic growth, there was no one answer for all countries. Governments should share their experience and best practices in that regard, and the Russian Federation was prepared to cooperate with a wide range of partners to achieve that aim.

65. **Ms. Moreno Guerra** (Cuba) said that the unjust and unsustainable international economic and political order, which continued to exclude the legitimate

interests of the countries of the South, was compounded by the adverse impact of the economic, financial, food and energy crises and climate change. It was ironic that the most severely affected populations resided in those countries that were least responsible for causing that situation. The persistence of extreme poverty and chronic hunger, illiteracy and non-attendance at school indicated that the Millennium Development Goals were far from being achieved. Notwithstanding the discouraging persistence of increasingly unequal terms of trade, reductions in official development assistance and limited technology transfers, restrictions imposed by economically advanced countries on exports from poor countries, mounting external debt and increasing military expenditure, urgent efforts must be undertaken to formulate the post-2015 development agenda.

66. Despite the impact of the ongoing commercial, economic and financial embargo and recent crises, Cuba had managed to fulfil and even surpass some of the Millennium Development Goals. It had one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world, high life expectancy and a universal and free healthcare system, and there was no illiteracy. More than two-thirds of its national budget was devoted to the improvement of education, health, social protection and social services, research and cultural activities. Over the past 50 years, Cuba had shared its modest resources with over 150 countries of the South, by sending out hundreds of thousands of health care workers and implementing free literacy and vision restoration programmes, as well as providing training for foreign medical personnel, all without any conditions. Much could be done to promote the right to development of millions of people with relatively few resources if developed countries demonstrated genuine political will and followed through on their commitments to provide official development assistance.

67. **Ms. John** (Australia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, although the challenges of poverty, conflict and discrimination could not be underestimated, mental illness was frequently invisible in society. Yet, according to the World Health Organization, 1 in 5 young people experienced mental health problems; and suicide was the second leading cause of death globally among persons between 15 and 29 years of age and the leading cause of death in Australia among persons aged 16 to 24. While International Youth Day had been observed in August 2014 under the theme of “Youth and Mental Health”,

indicating broader recognition of the issue by the international community, mental health needed to be mainstreamed into broader health frameworks at the international, regional and national levels, on the understanding that good mental health was fundamental to ensuring overall health and the full political, social and economic participation of people in society.

68. Australia was supporting its regional neighbours in improving mental health education and services through a national development assistance programme. At the national level, it was providing counselling, education and employment services to over 45,000 young people each year and planned to expand the programme to cover 80,000 young people annually. It was introducing innovative approaches to mental health, including online support services. While treatment was essential, prevention was the best investment and health education the strongest tool. All young people needed to be taught about mental health; the sharing of experiences was crucial to raising awareness and combating stigma. Australia urged Member States to take advantage of the opportunity presented by World Mental Health Day in October 2014 to increase awareness of that issue.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.