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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 10th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 15 October 2014, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Mesquita-Borges . . . . . (Timor-Leste)

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

**Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (continued)**

- (a) **Advancement of women (continued)** (A/69/38, A/69/211, A/69/222, A/69/224, A/69/256, A/69/368, A/69/369 and A/69/396)
- (b) **Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (continued)** (A/69/182 and A/69/346)

1. **Mr. Grant** (Canada) said that the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls were key priorities for his Government, which worked bilaterally and multilaterally to promote the leadership and full and equal participation of women in all aspects of social, economic and political life. Canada had made longstanding efforts to end child, early and forced marriage, promote women's economic empowerment and address violence against women and girls. His delegation strongly supported the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on the empowerment of women and girls in the post-2015 development agenda. Their advancement acted as a multiplier force on other development goals, including maternal and child health, that were central to the new agenda, thereby increasing the effectiveness of collective efforts and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

2. Canada condemned the use of rape as a weapon of war and all other forms of sexual violence, including in conflict. Perpetrators must be identified and held to account and survivors must receive assistance in reintegrating into their families and communities. In response to the heinous acts of sexual violence and other human rights abuses committed against women and children by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, his Government was contributing to the Justice Rapid Response mechanism and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to help investigate abuses; it was also supporting organizations on the ground working with victims, and collaborating with the United Kingdom on an assessment mission in Iraq to identify initiatives that would assist victims.

3. At the national level, his Government funded community-based projects aimed at encouraging women's leadership and democratic participation, promoting their economic security and ending gender-based violence. An action plan to address family

violence and violent crime against Aboriginal women and girls had recently been adopted. The plan provided for developing more community safety plans and ensuring families had support in navigating the Canadian justice system.

4. **Mr. Milubi** (South Africa) said that his delegation was concerned that, as the world shifted its focus to the post-2015 development agenda, the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) would be neglected. The international community must redouble its efforts to achieve the MDGs in the time remaining, particularly the goals concerning women. Increasing women's leadership and participation in the area of peace and security was very important. In humanitarian situations, women had critical roles to play in planning, preparedness, response and recovery; it was therefore imperative to make resources available to support and strengthen their roles of women in such situations.

5. Gender equality was a national priority in South Africa, where women had gained improved access to housing, water, sanitation, electricity, social services and health care. However, more remained to be done, as many women continued to bear the burden of poverty, inequality and unemployment disproportionately. To that end, his Government had defined job creation, education, health, rural development, food security and land reform, and fighting crime and corruption as its priorities. The realization of women's human rights, particularly those of rural women, was central to those priorities.

6. The Constitution and legislative framework, including laws pertaining to domestic violence and sexual offences, provided a progressive platform for dealing with violence against women and girls. His Government had established an inter-ministerial committee to address the causes of violence against women and children, and reinstated dedicated sexual offences courts and family violence, child protection and sexual offence units within the police force. In 2014, a Ministry of Women had been established in the Presidency to champion women's socioeconomic empowerment and human rights.

7. South Africa supported the continued commitment of UN-Women to integrate a gender perspective into the women, peace and security agenda, in implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), including in the recruitment, selection and

promotion of women in all United Nations agencies, particularly at senior levels. UN-Women had provided important impetus to the mainstreaming of gender perspectives across the entire United Nations system.

8. **Ms. Guzmán Madera** (Dominican Republic) said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had had a clear impact on the lives of Dominican women. The steps taken by her Government included the incorporation of women's rights and interests into domestic legislation and the adoption of a public policy to prevent and punish violence against women. Quotas for electoral representation had been established, and women currently accounted for just over half of the electorate. Dominican women were well represented in the government, judicial and private sectors, with several women having served as vice-presidents and supreme court justices over the previous decade. Her Government supported protection of the labour rights of women within the context of the International Labour Organization.

9. Her Government allocated 4 per cent of the gross domestic product to education, which had helped improve the quality of instruction and expand school infrastructure, providing opportunities for a better future for men and women. It had launched a literacy campaign with a view to eradicating illiteracy, a goal that her country was expected to attain by the following year. It was committed to the development of rural women and, to that end, had established a microcredit programme for women entrepreneurs and was assisting women, in particular single mothers, in establishing small and medium-sized enterprises. Alternative poverty eradication programmes that rewarded entrepreneurship and creativity and afforded opportunities for growth and prosperity had also benefited women.

10. The Dominican Republic contributed to the regular budget of UN-Women and helped maintain the UN-Women Country Office and the UN-Women Training Centre in Santo Domingo. Her Government looked forward to the additional support for the Training Centre pledged by some States.

11. **Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt) welcomed the February 2014 Cairo Declaration of the high-level meeting on implementing the MDGs for women and girls, gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Arab region, which would be the pillar for women's

empowerment in the Arab world. It emphasized the importance of including gender equality and the empowerment of women as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda. Egypt fully subscribed to all African efforts to achieve gender equality, including the Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the African Union Gender Policy and the Africa-wide UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign. However, the critical situation of many women in humanitarian situations all over the world was alarming; coordinated efforts needed to be mobilized and properly channelled to address that problem. A Presidential decree had been issued endorsing the establishment of the Arab States Regional Office of UN-Women in Egypt. Egypt counted on its strong partnership with UN-Women to contribute to national efforts aimed at achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in Egypt and in all other Arab countries.

12. Egypt's new Constitution included provisions to protect women from violence, and penalties for sexual harassment had been increased. Female genital mutilation was criminalized, and the Ministry of Health had issued a universal ban on the practice. Draft legislation addressing violence against women was ready for consideration by the new Parliament. Civil society organizations played a crucial role in supporting efforts to curb all forms of violence against women and eliminate female genital mutilation. The Kamla campaign, a school-based intervention developed by a coalition of non-governmental organizations, had been launched in 11 governorates and had encouraged over 17,000 families to declare their intention to abandon female genital mutilation.

13. Episodes of violence against women continued to be underreported. His Government had taken steps to raise awareness and to increase the number of female police officers. It had established a national hotline for victims and survivors of violence, including female genital mutilation, and was implementing Capacity-building programmes for rural health and family empowerment outreach workers. The National Council for Women contributed actively by making many proposals aimed at empowering women and ensuring their political and economic participation in Egyptian society.

14. **Ms. Ochir** (Mongolia) said that her delegation strongly supported the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality and empowering all

women and girls in the post-2015 development agenda, in addition to the integration of gender-sensitive targets and indicators into all relevant goals. Mongolia's national programme on gender equality envisaged specific policy actions to combat violence against women, support the development of rural women, and promote women's political participation and economic empowerment while ensuring equal access to technology. The Committee on Gender Equality, chaired by the Prime Minister, was coordinating the programme's implementation.

15. Her Government was paying special attention to improving maternal health. As a result of measures taken in that regard, Mongolia was on track to meet the target of 50 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2015. Antenatal care coverage had expanded to reach over 98 per cent of all pregnant women and 99 per cent of births were assisted by trained medical personnel. However, the quality of service and access to essential antenatal care in rural areas needed improvement, as did awareness of maternal health issues among adolescents and vulnerable groups.

16. A 2011 law on the promotion of gender equality had established quotas for up to 40 per cent of civil service positions to be occupied by women and specifically prohibited gender discrimination with respect to hiring, promotion, wages and access to education. Quotas had been established for women candidates under a law on elections, but the target of 30 per cent of parliamentary seats to be held by women was unlikely to be met by 2015.

17. In 2011, her Government had adopted a law on combating human trafficking and revised its national programme of action to reinforce the protection and support provided to victims, ensuring a rights-based approach and rehabilitation services, along with preventive, awareness-raising efforts. At the regional level, Mongolia had signed an agreement on cooperation to combat trafficking in persons with China's Macao Special Administrative Region. It looked forward to working closely with the countries in the region and the relevant international organizations to prevent and combat trafficking in women and girls.

18. **Ms. Salman** (Iraq) said that Iraq had achieved considerable progress towards the advancement of women in recent years. Since the end of the dictatorial regime, women had become partners in decision-

making and assumed posts in Parliament and international institutions. Iraq had submitted three reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women outlining its efforts to improve the situation of Iraqi women. Those measures included the modernization of the Ministry of Human Rights unit responsible for monitoring violations perpetrated against women. The Ministry of Women's Affairs conducted campaigns to combat violence against women, raise awareness of gender issues and educate people about the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. A unit on women had been established within the Council of Ministers to assist widows, divorcees, unmarried women, women with disabilities, unemployed women and wives of missing persons, and provide them with pensions through a social protection network. Efforts were also being made to help women upgrade their skills and find work opportunities, and gain access to housing and to small loans. Under a national strategy to combat violence against women adopted in 2013, gender units had been created in all Government institutions. Dozens of women police officers had graduated from the police academy and had been assigned to sectors involved in combating violence against women.

19. The Iraqi Constitution enshrined the principle of equality and participation in all aspects of public life and established quotas for the representation of women in Parliament. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, Iraq was increasing the proportion of women working in security institutions.

20. Following the attack on Iraqi cities by terrorist organizations in June 2014, Iraqi women, especially those of religious and ethnic minorities, had been subjected to heinous violations by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant throughout Iraqi territory controlled by that criminal organization, which had imposed un-Islamic, foreign customs on them. Since then, her Government had been working to provide assistance to the displaced and support for the survivors, while liberating regions that had fallen under terrorist control. Iraq called on the international community to continue supporting its efforts to save Iraqi women and lessen their suffering.

21. **Ms. Salim** (Libya) said that her country was a party to the Convention and other international instruments protecting the rights of women. Libya was

going through a difficult period as a result of the deteriorating security situation, which was, in turn, due to the spread of weapons and conflicts between illicit armed groups that had displaced thousands of civilians from their homes. Despite the adversity faced by Libyan women, they were active participants in development and in building a State based on the rule of law. Women opposed armament and militias, and supported the establishment of the army and the police. Libyan women held 32 of 200 seats in the Council of Deputies, and six seats in the Constitutional Drafting Assembly. They were also very involved in civil society institutions and volunteer work, a recent development in the new, democratic Libya.

22. Libya condemned all forms of violence against women and girls. It had adopted a decision that addressed the situation of women and girls who had fallen victim to sexual violence during the events of 2011 and established a fund to treat cases of sexual violence. Those measures guaranteed the victims access to quality post-traumatic treatment, as well as legal counselling, housing and employment.

23. Progress towards development goals concerning women, in particular the MDG on gender equality, had been halting and insufficient. Nevertheless, Libyan women had made considerable gains in recent years. National legislation enshrined gender equality in rights and responsibilities in all areas of life, including health care, education, social security, the right to own property and economic activity. Sustainable development could not be achieved without women's integration into all development plans and programmes. In that connection, her delegation endorsed the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda and the mainstreaming of gender into the other goals.

24. Libya expressed concern about the humanitarian situation of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation. Her Government strongly condemned the repressive practices of the occupying Power, particularly its crimes committed in the Gaza Strip. It affirmed the need for the international community to take responsibility and protect the rights of Palestinian women in the occupied territories.

25. **Ms. Abdulbaqi** (Saudi Arabia) said that gender equality was of great importance to the achievement of economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable

development; investment in women and girls' development had a multi-dimensional impact on economic growth, particularly in key areas such as agriculture, industry and services. Her Government stressed the importance of equal access to education and training at all levels.

26. Her Government had taken a number of measures to ensure the equal integration of women in national, regional and international development efforts. Saudi women were productive members of society; they held high positions in many sectors and participated in the process of national decision-making. They were represented on the Shura and had the full right to vote and to run for membership of municipal councils. Women were also integrated within diplomatic staff and participated in Saudi Arabia's delegations to international conferences.

27. Several measures and programmes had been implemented to promote women's employment. Her Government was undertaking a campaign to raise awareness of women's rights and change traditional social perspectives on the role of women with a view to removing obstacles to their participation in social, cultural and economic activities. Several government agencies, in partnership with civil society organizations, had launched a national campaign to raise women's awareness of their rights, particularly with regard to maternity protection, occupational health, paid study leave, social welfare and civil status. In addition, non-governmental organizations had established several volunteer programmes that provided legal, social and mental health counselling to women.

28. In line with its commitment to granting women their full rights under sharia law, her Government had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and would continue to fulfil its responsibilities. It had contributed \$2 million to the UN-Women, in addition to funding the participation of Saudi women in the United Nations Associate Experts Programme. Her Government reaffirmed its commitment to promote and protect all human rights, particularly those of women human right activists in Saudi Arabia, in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It called upon the international community to take swift action to prevent violence against women, exploitation and trafficking, and to bring all perpetrators to justice.

29. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia) said that, while the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action continued to provide a basis for action by Governments and other stakeholders for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, more needed to be done to protect women's rights at the international, regional and local levels. Recognizing that the advancement of women and their participation in development processes bolstered overall socioeconomic development, Namibia collaborated with regional and international partners to promote gender equality and the advancement of women and had adopted legislation, policies and programmes aimed at counteracting discriminatory practices and redressing historical imbalances. It had allocated resources to national legal reforms to ensure the mainstreaming of gender issues into all laws, policies and programmes.

30. Despite progress in the area of education, including an increase in the school enrolment rate for girls, Namibia continued to face high rates of teenage pregnancy, a challenge it was addressing through a policy that emphasized prevention through life-skills education and the retention of teenage mothers in school. His Government had also introduced a grant programme aimed at promoting income-generating activities and small and medium enterprises run by rural women.

31. It was disappointing that, despite progress by Member States in aligning their national legal frameworks with international and regional laws and instruments in the area of violence against women, gender-based violence was continuing to escalate. His Government called upon Member States to strengthen their legal systems to ensure that perpetrators of violence against women and children were brought to justice. At the national level, it had convened key stakeholders to develop a national plan of action on gender-based violence focusing on prevention, care for survivors, research and strengthened coordination, monitoring and evaluation. It was also conducting an awareness-raising campaign to end violence against women and legal literacy programmes to educate people about their rights and responsibilities and encourage men and boys to change their attitudes and behaviour and abandon negative gender stereotypes. Namibia was committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and, in that

regard, encouraged the United Nations to engage more women in high level decision-making and peace processes. Acknowledging the obstacle to empowerment that poverty, especially of rural women, continued to pose, Namibia called upon all stakeholders to work together and commit resources to address the challenges that hindered the advancement of women.

32. **Mr. Sauer** (Finland) said that denying women equal access, as well as equal rights, to education, knowledge and technology came at a huge cost to all humankind. Unless women and girls possessed the knowledge required to make decisions concerning their own reproductive health, and had access to basic sexual and reproductive health services, they could not participate effectively in the development of their communities. Sexual and reproductive health and rights must therefore be prioritized in the international agenda and the post-2015 development agenda. Improving girls' and women's access to education could be achieved through the provision of quality teacher training, elimination of primary school fees, and investment in safer school environments with sanitary facilities and toilets both for boys and for girls. Menstrual hygiene management must be de-stigmatized and relevant infrastructure provided in order to boost girls' school attendance. The multiple barriers to achieving universal primary education included inequalities based on ethnicity, poverty, language and disabilities; Finland congratulated Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 for their struggle for the right of all children to education.

33. Finland's own experience had shown that when women and men were active contributors to the economy, the entire economy benefitted. The slow progress gained toward women's rights to own land and property, which had been further hampered by climate change, limited their ability to participate in decision-making and development. The interrelationship of climate change, gender equality and food security must therefore be considered in the defining of the post-2015 development agenda.

34. Women's participation in peace processes and mediation was crucial for conflict prevention and the achievement of lasting peace. Women could not be seen only as victims of conflicts. More women were needed as high-level mediators and negotiators and also in the security sector, for example as peacekeepers and in the police force. In that regard, Finland continued to

promote the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions.

35. The participation of men and boys was indispensable for achieving gender equality. Recognizing the broader social benefits of mainstreamed gender equality, Finland strongly supported the inclusion of a stand-alone gender goal in the post-2015 development agenda and remained fully committed to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

36. **Ms. Mainali** (Nepal) said that her Government was committed to a rights-based approach to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment through increased participation of women in peace, development and governance efforts at all levels. The Interim Constitution of Nepal of 2007 had guaranteed the basic human rights of women and girls. Nepal's development agenda prioritized the empowerment and advancement of women through a multi-pronged approach that emphasized poverty eradication, access to health care, education and skills development and the creation of employment opportunities, including self-employment. While Nepal had made significant progress towards other MDGs, targets related to the full achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment continued to pose a critical challenge. Nepal therefore supported carrying forward the unfinished business of the MDGs and incorporating gender equality as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda, along with means of implementation.

37. Her Government had adopted a national five-year strategy and plan of action aimed at promoting gender empowerment and ending gender-based violence. Violence against women and girls was given due prominence in all programmes and activities related to women's empowerment; her Government had enacted a wide range of laws and established a high-level monitoring mechanism to address gender-based violence, in addition to undertaking a sustained effort to review laws that discriminated based on gender, age, class, caste and ethnicity. It was also implementing a national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008).

38. Efforts must be intensified to ensure the gender-sensitive enforcement of legislation aimed at combating human trafficking and to hold perpetrators accountable. To that end, her Government had enacted an anti-human trafficking law and adopted programmes that specifically addressed the problem of trafficking in

women and girls. It was also implementing a gender equality and social inclusion policy to ensure gender mainstreaming and the elimination of discrimination in all aspects of life. Nepal advocated a holistic approach to international migration, based on respect for human dignity regardless of migration status. It therefore supported initiatives aimed at defining the roles and responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels to combat violence against women migrant workers and protect their rights.

39. Nepal remained committed to the implementation of the various international and regional instruments on gender equality to which it was a party. As a least developed and land-locked developing country, it faced constant challenges, especially the constraint of limited resources. Her delegation therefore underscored the need to address the particular challenges faced by those groups of countries and looked forward to enhanced cooperation with its development partners.

40. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that, in hindsight, it was clear that the MDGs had accorded inadequate attention to violence against women, poverty as an impediment to girls' access to education, and the concentration of women in vulnerable and poorly-paid employment. The post-2015 development agenda should therefore take a more holistic and effective approach to women's empowerment, and should include a more ambitious goal on women, with corresponding means of implementation. The inclusion of a stand-alone goal among the sustainable development goals would be a good start.

41. Violence against women was a universal phenomenon and serious human rights violation to which his Government applied a policy of zero tolerance. It had passed several laws that protected women from violence and harassment, rape, acid crimes and honour killings and prohibited early and forced marriage. Other practical steps included the establishment of a gender crime cells, women's police stations and a special fund for women in distress and or in detention.

42. His Government had taken steps to promote women's participation in decision-making, and women currently accounted for approximately 20 per cent of the National Assembly and 17 per cent of the Senate. They held positions in federal and provincial cabinets, and 30 per cent of seats had been reserved for women

in all three tiers of local government. Measures taken to promote women's economic empowerment had included the establishment of a women's bank, an income support programme and the reservation of 10 per cent of public service jobs for women, as well as the creation of related skills development programmes. Other steps included the inclusion of women, on an equal basis, in credit and microfinance schemes, the allocation of 50 per cent of youth business loans to women entrepreneurs, and the implementation of programmes to facilitate women's access to land.

43. **Mr. Shava** (Zimbabwe) said that despite the progress achieved toward gender equality in the past 20 years, the number of women struggling for basic education, decent employment and health remained unacceptably high, and they remained the disproportionate victims of poverty and violence. As the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action approached, Member States must intensify their efforts to ensure that perpetrators of discrimination and violence against women were held accountable, relevant criminal legislation was fully implemented, and the root causes of discrimination and violence were addressed.

44. In Zimbabwe and other developing countries in which inadequate financial resources and lack of capacity often hindered the full implementation of laws, discussions on gender equality and on economic development were inseparable. To ensure that lack of awareness did not become a barrier to women's empowerment, Zimbabwe's Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development had implemented several programmes designed to disseminate information about the laws on inheritance, domestic violence and the family and supported advocacy initiatives by various grassroots organizations, including work to promote the role of men in achieving gender equality.

45. Education enhanced the capacity of women to achieve economic independence, protect themselves from abuse and claim their rights. Zimbabwe's emphasis on education had led to the achievement of gender parity at the primary and secondary levels as well as important progress toward closing gender gaps at the tertiary level. His Government continued to pay special attention to improving the situation of rural women, through strategic investment in the agricultural sector and measures to increase employment

opportunities. Agricultural education and training were of critical importance, as well as increased access to labour-saving technologies, particularly in view of disproportionate rural-urban migration by Zimbabwean men and youth, which had deprived many rural women of the manpower needed to perform agricultural work.

46. Efforts must be redoubled to address the root causes of violence against women and to implement and raise awareness of laws that criminalized it. Education was of key importance and must not only target women and girls as potential victims but also target men and boys as part of the solution. Assisting women in attaining economic independence of women afforded crucial protection and also reduced the risk of recurring abuse.

47. **Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru) said that his Government was striving to ensure the political empowerment of women through elections and to promote their inclusion in social programmes, notably through its participation in initiatives such as the Equal Futures Partnership. Its national plan for gender equality 2012-2017 provided a strategic policy axis for implementing national and international gender equality obligations, including those arising under its law on equal opportunity. A 2011 law penalizing the murder of women in the context of intimate relationships had been amended to increase penalties in the event of a murder involving two or more aggravating circumstances.

48. Peru welcomed the inclusion of a stand-alone gender goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the outcome document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. His delegation underscored its recent sponsorship of an event in the chamber of the Economic and Social Council celebrating the International Day of the Girl Child.

49. **Ms. Phuong** (Viet Nam) said that sustainable development could not be realized without the empowerment of over half of the world's population. Despite the significant progress made since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, inequality, discrimination and violence against women continued to pose daunting challenges that were compounded by the impact of armed conflict, global economic and social crises, food insecurity and climate change. Viet Nam therefore strongly supported the emphasis placed on gender equality and women's



empowerment by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

50. Gender-based discrimination was prohibited under the Constitution; Viet Nam had also enacted laws on gender equality against domestic violence and was currently implementing a national strategy and programme on gender equality. It had fully achieved all the MDGs relating to gender equality, women's empowerment and maternal health. Vietnamese women enjoyed increased representation in policy-making and legislative processes and in senior leadership positions and nearly 25 per cent of parliamentarians were women. Viet Nam's labour force participation rate for women was among the highest in the world. There had been a dramatic drop in the maternal mortality rate, as well as improvements in ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights. Numerous challenges nonetheless remained, including the persistence of violence against women and girls, a widening gender parity index at birth and an expanding gender pay gap, the persistence of outmoded customs in remote areas and the disproportionate impact of climate change and natural disasters on women. With the support of United Nations agencies and development partners, Viet Nam was committed to redoubling its efforts to address those challenges.

51. **Mr. Sachdev** (Thailand) said that the high incidence of gender-based violence in the world could be attributed to lack of implementation and underlying social attitudes on gender. His Government therefore attached importance to combating violence against women at every level. Women constituted a driving force of socioeconomic development.

52. Recent national efforts to combat violence against women, including domestic violence, had included the promotion of greater community involvement in protection efforts and the development of measures to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. At the international level, Thailand was planning to host an Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Group Meeting on gender-related killing of women and girls in November 2014. His Government supported the inclusion in the post-2015 development agenda of commitments to combat violence and end obstetric fistula and female genital mutilation.

53. Member States needed to continue to build their capacity to address the challenge of trafficking in women and girls, particularly that of identifying

victims and ensuring their access to support services. Thailand was committed to implementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, t His Government had made great strides in the areas of prosecution and law enforcement, , in part through increased coordination on the part of the three main law enforcement agencies to bring perpetrators to justice. It had developed guidelines and standard operating procedures for the identification of trafficking victims and intensified its efforts to rehabilitate victims through economic empowerment.

54. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka) said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provided an overarching policy framework for the advancement of the status of women and their socioeconomic and cultural empowerment. The progress made by Sri Lanka in education, health and the economic empowerment of women was demonstrated by World Bank statistics indicating that over 97 per cent of all Sri Lankan girls had completed primary education in 2012, and that Sri Lankan women between the ages of 15 and 24 had a literacy rate of over 98 per cent. Contraceptive use had increased sharply while fertility and maternal mortality rates had declined, with 99 per cent and 84 per cent of women receiving prenatal care and postnatal care respectively. The maternal and infant mortality rates were among the lowest in the region. That success had been achieved despite the devastating internal conflict which had ended only in 2009.

55. His Government had taken various steps to promote the economic empowerment of women, especially rural women, through initiatives such as microcredit schemes and support for small and medium-sized enterprises and women's collectives. some 90 per cent of women controlled the family income, either jointly with their spouses, or alone. High levels of education had done much to facilitate the shift among rural women from being dependent housewives to becoming supplementary income earners and decision-makers. The high literacy rate among mothers had undoubtedly influenced the high rate of retention among girls in secondary school.

56. Sri Lanka's legal framework ensured equality and equal protection for women. However, women's active participation in politics remained low. His Government recognized that leadership training was a key need and was taking steps at the local level to build a pool of

female leaders for national office. The youth parliament had also attracted a number of talented young women.

57. In response to the dramatic increase in the number of female-headed households in the aftermath of the internal conflict, measures had been taken to assess their vulnerabilities and address their needs, while affording them psychosocial support. To prevent the exploitation of women in conflict-affected areas and violence against women and children help desks had been established in police stations and hospitals, and child and women development units had been established at divisional secretariats. Various initiatives such as self-employment schemes, seed assistance programmes and cattle distribution schemes had been developed to support women affected by the conflict and the most vulnerable families were awarded a monthly stipend. Since the end of the conflict, his Government had invested over \$3 billion in former conflict-affected areas, with the majority allocated to socioeconomic development programmes focused on women.

58. The Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs was working with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund on issues addressed by Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), which were being incorporated into the National Action Plan on Women. A legal framework aimed at eliminating gender-based violence was already being implemented; his Government believed that education was key to overcoming that challenge. Another major challenge was poor nutrition, as 17 per cent of children under the age of five suffered from malnutrition. Many initiatives to promote good nutrition and well-being for women and children had been launched. In the context of demographic change, his Government was seeking to expand the participation of women in the labour market by improving their access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education. It had therefore proposed that the United Nations declare a Youth Skills Day to highlight the importance of skills development.

59. **Ms. Velichko** (Belarus) said that the Constitution of Belarus guaranteed equal rights and freedoms to women and men. Belarus was currently implementing the fourth national plan of action to ensure gender equality for 2011-2015 and, thanks to consistent efforts, had fulfilled the gender equality obligations

under the Millennium Declaration ahead of schedule. Maternal mortality had been reduced by 96 per cent and, according to World Health Organization ratings; Belarus had the lowest maternal mortality rate in the world: only 1 in 100,000 live births. Belarus was also one of only 16 countries in the world in which the human development index for women was equal to or higher than the index for men.

60. Belarus accorded priority to improving the situation of women in employment and income-generating activities. Unemployed women were provided with training in high-demand occupations, including setting up their own businesses, and the State programme of support for small and medium-sized businesses for 2013-2015 included measures to strengthen the status of women entrepreneurs. National legislation also provided a number of employment guarantees for women entering the workplace. In order to protect mothers, there were restrictions on the assignment of women to jobs requiring heavy labour or work in hazardous conditions; however those restrictions were applied with the consent of the women in question and, accordingly, could not be regarded as discriminatory. Since salaries were higher for jobs involving heavy labour, there was a difference in the income levels of women and men. Salary gaps were also associated with the feminization of employment in the social sphere, although salaries in such fields as education, health care and social services were gradually being increased. Moreover, women and men received equal pay if they were performing the same work and had the same responsibilities. The number of women with advanced education was growing, and an increasing number of women were pursuing graduate studies in scientific and technical fields.

61. Her Government was making significant efforts to combat violence against women. A number of crisis centres had been opened to provide support to victims, and the number of such centres had almost doubled over the past year.

62. The traditional family was encountering many challenges, including increased divorce rates, a decline in the number of registered marriages, and a fashion for childlessness. Weakening of the traditional institution of the family had led to increased migration, higher crime rates and ever younger offenders, and greater numbers of children brought up outside the family or in broken families. Those trends led to demographic problems which were beginning to threaten the national

security of many States, including Belarus. Her Government, along with non-governmental organizations, was undertaking significant efforts to strengthen families, promote the value of marriage, achieve gender equality in family relations and involve men in household work and the upbringing of children. Family well-being and traditional family values were obviously crucial to social development and stability and should be accorded due attention in the post-2015 development agenda.

63. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that while there had been many significant achievements in the advancement and empowerment of women, many challenges and constraints continued to hinder the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

64. The status of Palestinian women, who had been living for far too long in the unbearable situation created by continued Israeli military occupation and its oppressive policies and practices against the Palestinian people, had been severely affected by the deterioration of the situation in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. The intensified construction of illegal Israeli settlements, home demolitions, severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, collective punishment and gross violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to life, continued to have devastating ramifications not only on the advancement and empowerment of Palestinian women and their families, but on their basic well-being and survival.

65. During the recent 50-day criminal aggression perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied Gaza Strip, the Israeli occupying forces had killed at least 2,150 Palestinians and wounded 11,000 others. The occupying Power had caused massive destruction throughout Gaza, completely decimating entire neighbourhoods, as a result of which over 100,000 Palestinians had lost their homes. Thousands of structures, including United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East schools, had been damaged or destroyed by Israeli bombardment, and at least 65,000 Palestinians were still living in those schools after their homes had been destroyed.

66. International community should compel Israel to lift its illegal and inhumane blockade of Gaza, open all border crossings and immediately remove all restrictions on the movement of persons and goods to and from Gaza. Israel should not be granted immunity for its crimes, which constituted grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention and gross violations of core human rights instruments, including the International Covenants, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, all of which the State of Palestine had signed and was fully committed to respecting and upholding.

67. Despite the long history of subjugation, discrimination and violence by the occupying Power, Palestinian women had demonstrated resilience and steadfastness in their struggle for national and social liberation. She called on the international community to address that situation in accordance with international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and to compel Israel to end its 47-year military occupation and hold it accountable for its violations and crimes committed against the Palestinian people, particularly women and their families, and to provide them with international protection until the end of the occupation and realization of the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

68. **Ms. Al-Busaidi** (Oman) said that Omani women had made great strides in the previous four decades, becoming professionally active in the public and private sectors and assuming numerous positions alongside men. Women also enjoyed the right to vote and to stand for public office. As a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Oman was taking numerous measures to encourage women to participate in public life. Under the Omani Basic Law, women were considered fully equal to men before the law and in rights and responsibilities. A labour law protected women against firing on account of illness or pregnancy. Omani law granted women working in the public sector 50 days of paid maternity leave on five separate occasions during their tenure, and up to a year of unpaid leave. Over the previous decade, rising education rates among women had been accompanied

by higher marriage ages and declining childbirth rates. On 17 October, the National Day of Omani Women, a number of activities had been held to honour the country's woman pioneers in development work.

69. As a result of her Government's careful study of the international instruments concerning women and of the latest international developments on the matter, recent studies and reports on the situation of women in Oman had been, to a great extent, positive. Out of its conviction that protecting women was protecting society, her country would spare no effort in ensuring the rights of women were protected in all Government policies.

70. **Mr. Al-Khayarin** (Qatar) said that Qatar had brought about an economic and social transformation in the context of its efforts to advance women's rights and empower women to exercise all their political, social and economic rights, which were enshrined in the Constitution. His Government applied the principles of equality and non-discrimination among citizens and ensured that women had access to decent work, equal opportunities and high-level positions. Qatar had acceded to a number of international and regional instruments on women's human rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Qatar National Vision 2030, which envisaged Qatar's transformation into an advanced country capable of achieving sustainable development, affirmed the importance of the role of women in society and in decision-making in particular.

71. His Government had adopted a policy to combat violence against women and trafficking in persons, in addition to raising awareness of the issues through media campaigns, encouraging research to discover the extent and root causes of the phenomena, and extending protection to their victims. Qatar had also worked to provide quality education to its citizens and had introduced an equal opportunity policy, with a view to creating a climate conducive to women's empowerment and involvement in the labour force. Women's issues, in particular those relating to guaranteeing decent work and strengthening social protection, had been mainstreamed into all Government strategies and plans. Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser had championed humanitarian issues in general and women's empowerment in particular at the national, regional and international levels.

72. Qatar was fully committed to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in line with the Islamic Sharia and its social values and stemming from its belief in the family as the natural foundation of society. In closing, he noted with grave concern the abuses to which women living in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories were subjected by the Israeli occupying Power, preventing them from exercising their basic rights to education, health care, security and freedom of movement.

73. **Mr. Xing** Jisheng (China) said that the international community should strengthen its political commitment, mobilize resources and adopt effective measures to promote the advancement of women worldwide, in particular by including the topic as a separate stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda, with priority attention to women's economic development and poverty reduction. In formulating targets related to employment, health and education, women's special needs should be adequately reflected. Full consideration should be given to specific situations and the different stages of development of different countries. While working to formulate the post-2015 development agenda, Member States should not lessen their efforts to realize the Millennium Development Goals and attain unmet goals such as the reduction of maternal mortality. International cooperation in women-related endeavours should be strengthened and financial and technical assistance to developing countries increased. China hoped that the activities organized by UN-Women to commemorate Beijing+20 would further galvanize political consensus and point the way forward.

74. Women's rights and interests must be protected in crisis situations and in circumstances of armed conflict, natural disasters and migration. While national governments bore the primary responsibility for protecting women's rights and interests in such situations, the international community should provide constructive assistance, with a special focus on capacity-building, while fully respecting the sovereignty of the countries concerned.

75. His Government had made gender equality a basic national policy for social development and had steadily improved its legal system to ensure the protection of women's rights and interests and integrated the advancement of women into its economic and social development plan. Over the past year, China had promulgated special provisions on

labour protection for women employees covering maternity leave and the prevention of sexual harassment; laws against domestic violence were being drafted; over 100 billion yuan in microfinancing had been issued to women, which had helped tens of millions of urban and rural women to gain employment or open their own businesses; and a pilot project offering free cancer screening project had benefited over 13 million rural women.

76. His Government would continue to integrate gender equality into the formulation and implementation of laws and policies, create an enabling social and cultural environment for the advancement of women, increase women's participation in the political and economic spheres, strengthen the protection of women's rights and interests, and intensify international cooperation in the advancement of women worldwide.

77. **Mr. Iiyas** (Kazakhstan) said that as a member of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, his delegation had actively advocated for a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the post-2015 development agenda. Kazakhstan had developed relevant policies through the National Commission on Gender and Family Demographic Policy, under the auspices of the President. As the host of the multi-country office of UN-Women, his Government was assisting with the subregional review of activities, which would contribute to the regional review process. A number of laws had been drafted related to the protection of children, reproductive health, prevention and treatment of diseases, and rehabilitation from serious medical conditions. His Government was focusing on combating human trafficking and ensuring the equal participation of women in the labour force and protection against domestic and other forms of violence.

78. The national plan of action for improving the status of women and the strategy on gender equality for 2006-2016 were being rigorously implemented with a view to enhancing the economic status of women, developing women's entrepreneurship and strengthening the family in society. The recently adopted Kazakhstan 2050 development strategy underscored the importance of promoting maternal health, advancing the economic empowerment of women and extending their social rights and capacities. There were currently 29 women serving as members of Parliament of Kazakhstan; women also held high-level positions within the Government and their representation in the overall

political decision-making process in various spheres amounted to almost 20 per cent.

79. His Government was committed to implementation of the programme of action of the International Conference on Population and Development and was sustaining the progress made in decreasing maternal mortality. It was striving to reach the level of developed countries and to provide universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health services, particularly to adolescents and youth. Both the formal and informal educational systems provided comprehensive sex education. His Government was strategizing the effective integration of population dynamics into development planning at the national and subnational levels, with a view to better planning and building of sustainable cities and the strengthening of urban-rural linkages.

80. In the wake of the financial crisis, which had had a disproportionate and particular impact on women, the mainstream development model needed to be reassessed to promote greater equity, security and sustainability and eliminate discrimination and marginalization. The post-2015 development agenda must ensure that macroeconomic policies and the international financial system worked for the comprehensive advancement of women, and with their direct engagement, including in conflict zones and throughout peacebuilding processes. As a former member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, his Government had been consistently fulfilling its long-term voluntary financial commitments, and would continue to do so.

81. **Ms. Dantuono** (Observer for the Holy See) said that improvements in the situation of women, and in particular the decline in maternal and infant mortality, showed that mobilizing adequate resources saved many lives. Further efforts needed to be made to tackle the difficulties faced by women as a result of lack of education and health care, including female genital mutilation and obstetric fistula. Her delegation was particularly alarmed by the impact of violence, including sexual violence, on women in conflict situations in many countries and regions around the world, more recently in the Middle East. The international community should take all possible steps to make humanitarian aid accessible to all victims of violence and, in particular, to protect women and children from abuses and human trafficking.

82. Poverty often created or compounded an unacceptable gap between men and women in terms of access to basic services and education. Much more needed to be done to address gender inequality. Urgent attention should be focused on combating poverty, hunger, lack of access to clean water and basic health care, education and employment opportunities. Rescuing women and girls from poverty was key to their advancement and the attainment of equality.

83. The advancement of women should not be measured merely by the criterion of equality with men. For example, efforts should also include campaigning for better conditions for mothers. Efforts to promote the advancement of women should not be made at the expense of other human rights. Women migrant and domestic workers, and women living in rural areas or in slums, had been playing a critical role in the success of small-scale economic activities and microfinance. Assuring women's equal access to resources, capital and technology was a concrete way of assuring their advancement. Every effort should be made to better recognize women as protagonists in every aspect of life. The invaluable contributions made by women throughout the centuries should be recognized, and the Holy See supported all efforts and initiatives that protected the inherent dignity of women, improved their living conditions and promoted the recognition and full development of their skills and talents.

84. **Ms. Ellis** (New Zealand) said that progress on the advancement of women would require effort, commitment and political will. The economic and social benefits of women's equality accrued to all society; a higher rate of economic well-being and growth could be observed in those countries with a higher proportion of gender equality.

85. The diversity of the women of New Zealand, including indigenous women, Pacific women, Asian women, women with disabilities and migrant women, required targeted approaches to ensure equal opportunity. In recent years, her Government had launched an initiative driven by indigenous Maori values to provide health and social services to families in need. Supporting families within the community context as opposed to an institutional context helped address key challenges confronting indigenous New Zealand women, including domestic violence. In the Pacific islands region, her Government supported a variety of projects to help communities empower local women, including the Pacific Prevention of Domestic

Violence Programme, an innovative partnership between the Pacific Island chiefs of police and the New Zealand police, and the Pacific Parliamentary Partnership, which aimed to increase the number of women parliamentarians in the region.

86. New Zealand was a firm supporter of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and was currently focusing on domestic and regional recruitment and training policies to increase the number and seniority of women available for deployment into the decision-making levels of military and police security and peace missions abroad. During the previous month, New Zealand had become the first Member State to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty. It had developed a model law to assist Pacific States and small States in other regions to adjust their regulations and laws to help implement the Treaty.

87. Her Government believed that the topic of gender equality should be a cross-cutting theme in all the sustainable development goals, and should be a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda. In that regard, it welcomed progress made on better data sets. New Zealand, like other countries still had much work to do, but the ambitious aspirations of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were attainable. Her Government welcomed the commemorative activities planned by UN-Women in connection with Beijing+20, which presented an opportunity to renew political will and mobilize the public.

88. **Mr. Lasso Mendoza** (Ecuador) said that for a long time, the traditional development model, instead of reducing inequality, had increased it. His Government had therefore established a new people-centred development model that sought not only to meet basic needs but also to achieve a life of dignity, in peace and in harmony with nature. That objective implied a harmonious relationship between peoples and individuals, for which gender equality and the eradication of violence and domination were prerequisites. Ecuador had developed various policies to promote gender equality, which was a cross-cutting theme in its democratic reforms. It was implementing a national plan for the eradication of gender-based violence and conducting information campaigns and a national survey on family relations and gender-based violence.

89. To eradicate poverty, Ecuador was strengthening its economic redistribution policy by providing cash

grants and credits that primarily benefited women and favoured their economic autonomy. Achievements in that respect included the standardization of remuneration for paid domestic work, the expansion of social security, including coverage for domestic workers, and a campaign for sharing family responsibility for housework.

90. A national strategy for family planning and the prevention of adolescent pregnancy was being implemented to guarantee the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights. Through the provision of guidance and counselling his Government sought to change cultural patterns and eliminate taboos. The strategy promoted the shared responsibility of men and included access to comprehensive sexual education and contraceptive methods, including emergency contraception. The National Directorate of Health was facilitating the provision of health care to indigenous women while respecting their cultural practices.

91. Ecuador was endeavouring to ensure universal quality education without discrimination in order to maximize the potential of women and girls. Over the past seven years, women's participation in the political arena and in the justice system had increased. Ecuador had unquestionably achieved significant progress, none of which would have been possible without the contribution of its diverse population of women.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*