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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 13th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 15 October 2014, at 3 p.m.

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

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of children**

**(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (A/69/165, A/69/166, A/69/212, A/69/260, A/69/262, A/69/264 and A/69/394-S/2014/684)

**(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children** (A/69/258)

1. **Mr. Lake** (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/69/260) and the follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/69/258), said that, although strong partnerships with Member States, civil society and United Nations agencies had made it possible to achieve progress for children around the world, the international community should renew its commitment to help those children left behind achieve some measure of their full potential. Almost half of the world's people living in poverty were 18 years or under. Nearly 570 million children were deprived of their rights, and 400 million of the world's poor were under 12 years of age.

2. All States were urged to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto. A large number of Member States had turned their words into practical action for children. By 2013, over 90 countries had specific legislation prohibiting sexual violence against children, the procurement or supply of children for pornography, or the possession and dissemination of images of child abuse.

3. The times were characterized by crisis: host countries teeming with refugees, growing transnational and internal conflicts, climate change, the malevolent use technology, and pandemics. But the children's lives at stake did not allow for discouragement. Formidable challenges remained: 17,000 children under five died every day, mostly from preventable causes, and at least 250 million of the world's primary school age children still failed to learn basic literacy or arithmetic.

4. One of the greatest challenges to overcome was inequality, and innovative solutions already in use, such as SMS-based services, could be employed to

remedy it more efficiently and cost-effectively than ever before. As the Committee reflected on the past 25 years, it should draw inspiration from its achievements to courageously confront the challenges ahead. With optimism and renewed purpose, new partnerships and tools, the international community could build a world fit for all children.

5. **Ms. Zerrougui** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report (A/69/212), said that the international community should reflect on the enormous progress made in building solid legal, policy and operational frameworks to protect children from the impact of armed conflict, while also recognizing the remaining challenges. The intensity of fighting in recent months had reached unprecedented levels in many situations, and children were the primary victims. They had been killed, brutalized and recruited by armed forces. In the Syrian Arab Republic alone, 6.5 million children had been affected by the conflict. In South Sudan, both parties to the conflict had committed grave violations against children.

6. The wave of armed groups espousing extremist ideologies sweeping across northern Mali, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Nigeria posed additional threats to children. The association of children with extremist armed groups posed new challenges, raising questions on how to apply counter-terrorism measures and how to reintegrate such children back into society. The appalling trend of attacks on education and health care facilities revealed the need to remedy the gaps in protection mechanisms for children. The international community should ensure that children affected by conflict continued to learn.

7. Over the past year, she had engaged with the relevant stakeholders during field visits in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Yemen. Important progress had been made. Eight Governments had joined the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, which she had launched in partnership with UNICEF to prevent the use of children by government forces by 2016. Further progress included the de-listing of an army, the signing of action plans, the release of children, and the establishment of child protection units. To broaden the campaign, a series of consultations had been held to exchange best practices and identify how to maximize its impact. Donors were urged to support the campaign

as those countries willing to eradicate child recruitment often lacked the resources necessary to reach their goal.

8. During the reporting period, she had engaged with the 51 groups listed in annexes to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/68/878-S/2014/339). Dialogue was currently underway with groups in the Central African Republic, Mali, Myanmar, South Sudan, Darfur, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Governments were strongly encouraged to support the work of child protection actors and to facilitate access to their territory to enable dialogue with those groups and verify the implementation of commitments made by them.

9. Partnership and collaboration were central to her mandate. The commitment and determination demonstrated by the member States of the African Union to strengthen child protection systems was encouraging, as was the partnership agreement signed recently with the League of Arab States to develop a framework of action for the protection of children affected by conflict. Her office had also collaborated with United Nations partners on a guidance note meant to strengthen advocacy, monitoring and the reporting of attacks on schools and hospitals.

10. All Member States that had not yet ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict were urged to do so. UNICEF and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had made commendable efforts to provide access to education in emergencies. Donors were urged to sustain such efforts and replicate them in other contexts. Stakeholders were also encouraged to increase focus and resources on community-based reintegration initiatives that could provide children with sustainable options. The generosity of donors had enabled her office to carry out its mandate more effectively and additional support would be appreciated.

11. In the upcoming year, with Member State support, her office would take a multidimensional approach to the implementation of her mandate using all possible forums within the United Nations, regional organizations and bilaterally, to strengthen existing child protection frameworks, including by supporting initiatives that could respond to the new challenges posed to child protection in conflict situations.

12. **Ms. Santos País** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children),

introducing her annual report (A/69/264), said that the freedom of children from violence lay at the heart of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and significant progress had been achieved in that area. The Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography was nearing universal ratification, and there was greater adherence to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. The adoption of the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice would help secure a protective environment for at-risk children while addressing their exposure to violence within the criminal justice system.

13. Although almost 90 countries had strategies to prevent and respond to violence against children, only 10 per cent of the world's children enjoyed legal protection from violence, and law enforcement proved challenging. Progress, unfortunately, had been too slow and uneven to make a genuine breakthrough. For millions of children, the Convention remained a broken promise. Even the incremental progress in the field of data and research had been uneven and fragmented. High levels of unemployment and cuts in social spending had added severe strain on families, leading to increased levels of stress, depression, domestic violence, and child neglect and abuse.

14. New and exciting information and communication technologies, while most useful, also carried the risk of child exposure to harmful information, abuse and exploitation, and cyberbullying. The worrying digital divide between and within countries and the generational divide experienced by teachers, parents and caregivers had led her to prioritize the acceleration of progress in ensuring children's online safety and protection from violence. Concerted efforts by all relevant actors could result in the implementation of a multifaceted, safe, inclusive and empowering digital agenda for children that capitalized on the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies and also effectively addressed online abuse and violence against children.

15. The international community should not simply try to match the pace of changing technologies, but should push for the involvement of political leaders, ordinary citizens and young people in a global effort to put an end to violence against children. The protection

of children from violence should be placed at the heart of the post-2015 global development agenda.

16. **Mr. Köhler** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union actively supported the Children, Not Soldiers campaign and asked the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict what progress had been achieved in its implementation and also what could be done to encourage the exchange of best practices in order to eliminate and prevent the recruitment of children by government armed forces and other abuses of children. Furthermore, what key challenges in the reintegration and rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict had she faced, and what lessons had been learned from those experiences? The Special Representative should clarify the sections of her report referring to the inclusion of the protection of children from violence in the post-2015 development agenda and the participation of children in agenda-related discussions. On the basis of her discussions with children, what aspects of their lives did they wish to see addressed in the post-2015 development agenda?

17. **Ms. Alsaleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that 22 Syrian children had been killed and 100 others injured in a terrorist bombing of a primary school in Homs in October 2014. The following day, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict had issued a press release, expressing outrage at the crime. The declaration had naively omitted condemnation of the perpetrators of the crime, failing to qualify it as an act of terrorism to begin with. When her delegation had phoned the office of the Special Representative in New York to enquire about the omission, particularly a team from the Special Representative's Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict had been in Damascus at the time of the bombing, the office had responded that the team was observing the Eid al-Adha holiday and had therefore been unable to verify the explosion or conduct the necessary investigations to determine the identity of the perpetrators.

18. In the Idlib region, 15 children had been killed by corrupted vaccinations administered to them by health organizations belonging to terrorist groups. The office of the Special Representative had withheld comment on that incident. On countless occasions, the Syrian Arab Republic had promptly notified the relevant United Nations officials, including the Special Representative, and demanded that they identify the

perpetrators and condemn their actions. The team appointed by the Special Representative, composed of United Nations officials, was paid thousands of dollars a month by the Organization to carry out its mandate in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which stipulated that the team's purpose was to provide for the systematic gathering of accurate, timely and objective information on grave violations committed against children in armed conflict.

19. The lives of Syrian children were far more important than the team members' enjoyment of their holidays within and outside her country while discharging their very serious duties. In closing, she noted with dismay that paragraph 8 of the report of the Special Representative had, in error, referred to the well-known terrorist entity known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria as an extremist group, when it had, in fact, been referred to as a terrorist group by Security Council resolution 2170 (2014).

20. **Mr. Waheed** (Maldives) thanked the Special Representative on Violence against Children, whom they had hosted the previous year, for her active engagement with Member States. More Governments should become signatories to and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. His Government had been one of the Protocol's negotiators and among the first signatories, and hoped to ratify it in the near future. Perhaps the Special Representative could elaborate on how the number of signatories to the Protocol could be increased. His Government also wished to know how widely the publications of the Special Representative, particularly the child-friendly versions of the Optional Protocols to the Convention, had been distributed.

21. **Mr. Ledergerber** (Switzerland) welcomed the renewal of the mandate of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the launch of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign. Switzerland had formulated an action plan to improve the protection of children used as soldiers in conflict and urged the international community to engage in similar efforts. He asked the Special Representative how non-State actors could be encouraged to sign and implement such action plans, and what methods could be employed to monitor their implementation. He also asked how the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict could exert greater influence over the implementation of such plans.

22. **Mr. De León Huerta** (Mexico) said that his Government was deeply concerned by peer violence. Mexico would submit a draft resolution on the issue of bullying and appreciated the support of the Special Representative on Violence against Children in that initiative. He asked her to provide examples of good practices to combat bullying. Her two visits to his country over the past year had provided valuable input on how to harmonize national standards with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and a law on the rights of children and adolescents was in the process of being adopted. His Government was also concerned by the situation of children and youth in conflict with the law and had established a working group to avoid juvenile detention and rebuild the social fabric. He asked what the Special Representative would recommend to alleviate the vulnerability of children and adolescents in conflict with the law.

23. **Ms. Mansouri** (Algeria) reiterated her country's support for the Children, Not Soldiers campaign and asked the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to detail the progress achieved to date in that regard. Her Government was deeply concerned by the number of children victimized by criminal justice systems as victims, witnesses or alleged offenders, who were sometimes detained in inhuman conditions and subjected to harassment and abuse. National legislation should clearly prohibit all forms of violence against children while introducing information-sharing, awareness-raising and social mobilization initiatives to bring an end to such violence. She asked the Special Representative on Violence against Children whether she intended to increase cooperation with regional organizations in that regard and, if so, what would be the area of focus.

24. **Ms. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) stressed the magnitude of the damage inflicted upon children and their families by Israel's recent bombardment of Gaza, citing an estimate by UNICEF that 373,000 children in the region were in urgent need of direct and specialized psychosocial support. The occupying Power had also caused massive destruction to homes, schools and the civilian infrastructure. She requested further information from the Executive Director on the types of services that were being provided to child victims and their parents to cope with that traumatic experience. Expressing her delegation's wholehearted agreement with the need for accountability in the case of violations against

children, she asked whether the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict had plans to visit the occupied State of Palestine, specifically Gaza, in the near future.

25. **Mr. Al-Obaidi** (Iraq), referring to the discussion of civilian casualties in paragraph 4 of the report of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (A/69/212), said that he wished to clarify that those casualties had been caused solely by attacks perpetrated by ISIS in areas controlled by the terrorist group. For their part, Iraqi forces had, in fighting ISIS, made every effort to shield the country's civilian population from its brutality. Large numbers of Iraqi civilians, including children living in regions controlled by non-State groups, had lost their lives. While no persons under 18 years of age were enlisted in the Iraqi military, non-State armed groups did recruit children. He emphasized that those groups were not armed groups, as stated in the Special Representative's report, but rather terrorist groups, a designation agreed upon by international consensus in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

26. **Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan), acknowledging UNICEF's active work in Sudan, including the field visit carried out by members of its Executive Board in May 2014, asked the Executive Director for further information on measures being taken to treat and prevent the outbreak of Ebola among children in Africa, as well as challenges that had been encountered in funding those measures. His country wished to know about efforts being undertaken to secure funds from the United Nations regular budget and the donor community, as well as any alternative sources of support that had been identified. A more comprehensive approach was needed to address the issue of children in armed conflict and its root causes. The hosting by Sudan of an upcoming regional conference on human trafficking was an example of the efforts being undertaken by his Government protect the rights of children.

27. **Ms. Pringle** (United Kingdom) said that, while the active engagement of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict had led to significant progress toward the protection of children in armed conflict, violations continued to be committed against children throughout the world. She asked the Special Representative to elaborate on her plans to tackle the recruitment and use of children by non-State armed groups and on the potential role of the United Nations country teams and field missions in those efforts. She

would also like to know how greater pressure could be exerted upon persistent perpetrators to end violations committed against children. Underscoring the importance of collective action in eradicating abuses against children, she welcomed the Special Representative's engagement with regional organizations and requested an update on the implementation of the declaration signed with the African Union in September 2013 on the mainstreaming of child protection mechanisms in all of its peace and security activities.

28. **Ms. Larsen** (Norway) emphasized the finding of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children that children in care and justice institutions were at disproportionate risk of violence. Commending the engagement of the Special Representative on Violence against Children in the development and adoption of the model strategies on the elimination of violence against children in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, she asked whether any concrete plans had been made to follow up on the dissemination and implementation of those model strategies and how international partners could contribute. According to research, children, especially girls, who had been formerly associated with armed forces were inadequately represented in rehabilitation programmes and not enough had been done to remedy that situation. She asked how the overall participation of children in such programmes could be improved and what could be done to ensure that girls were fully represented in reintegration programmes.

29. **Ms. Bardaoui** (Tunisia) underscored the importance of translating words into action to address the challenges posed to the realization of children's rights and emphasized the need to strengthen national and international cooperation to protect Tunisian children from the real threat of violence. She asked which strategies or plans of action were advocated by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict for the reintegration of children who had been displaced or separated from their families. Her delegation would also like to know what the Special Representative expected from the agreement signed between the United Nations and the League of Arab States to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict and, more specifically, what was expected from Arab States in connection with that agreement.

30. **Mr. Mendonça e Moura** (Portugal) requested further details on anticipated work, particularly in the

context of the implementation of the guidance note on Security Council resolution 1998 (2011), to protect schools and hospitals from attack in conflict-affected areas. His delegation welcomed information on avenues for cooperation with other stakeholders to keep children in school in emergency situations and would also like to know what measures were being considered to address the targeting of children by radicalized non-State actors. Noting the reference to persisting and emerging challenges related to violence against children contained in the report of the Special Representative on Violence against Children (A/69/264), he asked whether further work would be done to address those issues, particularly in the context of ongoing cooperation efforts with regional organizations. He would also like to know whether further cooperation with United Nations entities and other stakeholders was anticipated to ensure the safe and meaningful engagement of children with information and communication technologies.

31. **Ms. Juodkaitė-Putrimienė** (Lithuania) expressed her delegation's concern for the well-being of children who were recruited by armed groups, particularly in the context of recent escalating conflict such as that in Ukraine. As non-State groups did not hold themselves accountable under international law, a means of obliging them to undertake commitments with respect to the recruitment of children must be devised. She requested further information on the key challenges posed to effective engagement with those groups and on the potential for regional and subregional organizations to contribute to efforts in that area.

32. **Ms. Vadiati** (Islamic Republic of Iran) asked whether the Executive Director and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict had had the opportunity to raise concerns with third parties about the barbaric acts committed against children in her region by violent extremist groups such as ISIS and how that situation would be addressed moving forward. She requested information on plans to bring global attention to the dire situation of girls who were sold or enslaved as spoils of war, an increasingly prevalent practice among terrorist groups operating in that region, and asked whether the Executive Director and Special Representative had raised their concerns regarding the recruitment of child soldiers by non-State actors with the countries of origin of children who had been recruited by extremist groups.

33. Her delegation would also like to know whether the list of non-State actors included in annexes to the report of Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (A/68/878-S/2014/339) had been based on the relevant list of the Counter-Terrorism Committee or on studies conducted by the Special Representative, and whether any plans had been made to include the names of the extremist groups listed by the Counter-Terrorism Committee in the list of the Special Representative.

34. **Ms. Murillo** (Costa Rica) asked what further efforts could be undertaken by the General Assembly to promote children's access to education in emergency situations and what related issues could be emphasized in the work of its Committees. Expressing her gratitude for the visit to Costa Rica organized by Special Representative on Violence against Children, she asked how new technologies could be deployed to promote the rights of children and how online education, including human rights education, could be used to prevent online abuse.

35. **Ms. Hasse-Mohsine** (Germany) said that Germany would continue to place particular emphasis on the plight of children in conflict situations, both through its work at the United Nations and on the ground. Given the difficulty of ensuring the reliability of age verification mechanisms, particularly in countries where birth registration was not yet universal, she asked the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to share examples of best practices for strengthening those mechanisms and to indicate how obstacles to age verification could be overcome. She also requested examples of practical ways in which the participation of children in mediation and peace processes could be strengthened and how issues affecting them could be better reflected in peace agreements.

36. **Ms. Hamilton** (United States of America) expressed her delegation's congratulations to Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi on receiving the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize and underscored the need to hold perpetrators accountable for the wide range of abuses endured by children in conflict situations. Emphasizing the importance of community acceptance for ensuring the reintegration of children who had experienced sexual violence in conflict situations, she asked whether the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict could share any best practices that had emerged from work done with communities that

accepted child victims of sexual abuse and babies born of rape. She would like to know to what extent lessons of rehabilitation in non-conflict settings were transferrable to conflict settings. Shocked by the virtual invisibility of child maltreatment and the high incidence of early and forced marriage, she asked the Special Representative on Violence against Children how the strengthening of collaboration with regional organizations and institutions had contributed to increased protection for children.

37. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) expressed her country's gratitude to UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the assistance that they had provided to refugees arriving in Cameroon from conflict-affected neighbouring countries. She called upon donors and the international community to provide additional support to enhance the capacity of UNICEF to respond to the needs of those affected by armed conflict.

38. **Mr. Ish-Hurwitz** (Israel), noting the difficulty of obtaining reports on the situation in Gaza owing to the risk of violence faced by journalists, asked whether the use of schools for storage of weapons in that region had been documented. He would like to know to what extent the use of children as human shields by Hamas or as labour for digging attack tunnels in the region had been noted or investigated. He requested further information on efforts undertaken to assess the psychosocial effects of those violations of the rights of Palestinian children.

39. **Ms. Zerrougui** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), said that her global initiative to end the recruitment and use of children by government forces provided a valuable framework for enabling Member States to identify shortcomings within existing mechanisms and legislation. Action plans had been concluded with six countries and outreach was being extended to regional organizations and countries with bilateral agreements to enable the effective integration of action plans within those regional frameworks. Such collaboration was particularly vital in regions where the necessary political will existed but capacity was limited. Road maps were being developed to provide countries with clear indications of progress still to be made toward established targets.

40. Noting that progress in the area of reintegration remained weak, she emphasized that lasting outcomes

could not be achieved solely through the political will to end recruitment. Stronger support from Member States was required to implement long-term rehabilitation programmes for children who had suffered recurring abuse and severe trauma and to encourage community acceptance of children returning from conflict. Because many existing programmes did not adequately address the needs of children from the beginning of their involvement in conflict, capacity to involve them in the building of sustainable peace remained limited.

41. Engagement with non-State actors remained challenging owing in part to government-imposed barriers impeding access to non-State groups and to the heterogeneity of those groups. Multidimensional strategies were therefore necessary to identify the specific actors on whom pressure could be applied. Concrete commitments to sign action plans with non-State actors had been undertaken, notably in the Philippines and Sudan, and measures were being implemented to end recruitment by those groups. Non-State groups were also initiating dialogue with members of the international community with the consent of the Governments concerned. Further efforts were nonetheless required to ensure that those groups followed through on their commitments. Cooperation could be enforced by applying sanctions and pressure, including military pressure, on the relevant actors and ensuring that perpetrators were brought to justice.

42. The guidance note on Security Council resolution 1998 (2011) had contributed to raising public awareness of military attacks and appropriation of schools and hospitals and to promoting engagement with stakeholders to protect those establishments. In all conflict situations, children's vulnerability was compounded by Governments' limited capacity to provide for their education and health care, an issue that had been receiving increasing attention from international partners. In addition to accessibility of education, greater awareness of the vulnerability of curricula to political propaganda must be promoted.

43. Age verification mechanisms were most effective when commitment to implementing them was strong and barriers to screening were minimal. She hoped to visit Gaza in the context of a series of field visits planned for the upcoming year. Lastly, she said that much could be done by the General Assembly to support education for displaced children in order to provide them with a brighter future.

44. **Ms. Santos País** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children) said that the post-2015 development agenda was indeed a golden opportunity to ensure that children were protected from violence, abuse and exploitation. Some 700,000 children had eagerly participated in the United Nations My World survey in consultations organized by the United Nations Development Group. They had emphasized the need to be protected from violence in all circumstances and to have access to education guaranteed, given the high incidence of violence in schools and the investment in tolerance and dialogue that education constituted. The process demonstrated that children were citizens of the present with great expectations for the future, not merely citizens of the future.

45. She had made child-friendly materials and interactive websites a priority and was currently disseminating publications in 10 languages, with plans to add more. Collaboration with UNICEF and regional organizations was under way to make materials available to children on the ground. Country visits to educate professionals involved in child protection about international standards were also crucial to ensuring more systematic implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Her work had been characterized from the start by consistent cooperation with regional organizations, including the League of Arab States, the Caribbean Community and the European Union, with a view to establishing regional strategies with time-bound goals and adopting political declarations with clear commitments to eradicate violence against children. Moreover, peer reviews and cross-regional meetings were held on an annual basis.

46. In order to prevent and eliminate violence against children in criminal justice systems, strategies must be disseminated in all languages and taken on board by all relevant sectors. In addition, justice systems must adopt restorative justice approaches and work more closely with other sectors to prevent the stigmatization and criminalization of young people. Within the United Nations system, she continued to cooperate with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNICEF and would be participating in the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the



adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in November 2014.

47. It must be recognized that violence against children posed a challenge for all countries. Even in advanced economies, the impact of the economic crisis had led to cuts in the number of professionals working with children and in child and family benefits. In terms of the use by young children of new technologies, little was known, particularly about the incidence in low- and middle-income countries. It would be necessary to work more closely with Governments, the private sector and other actors, including the academic sector, in order to close existing gaps in human rights education.

48. **Mr. Lake** (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the United Nations had spoken out on a wide range of violations of children's rights committed during armed conflicts, including such heinous acts as sexual abuse of girls as well as attacks on and use of schools. UNICEF had provided some 30,000 children in the Gaza Strip with psychosocial support, direct counselling, text-message-based assistance to caregivers and telephone helplines for children. In the aftermath of conflict, it was crucial to repair the psychological damage sustained by children, for their own sake and that of the prospects for peace in the region, particularly in the light of new scientific findings on the impact of conflict on the brain development of young children.

49. The United Nations and Governments were responding to the Ebola crisis as rapidly as possible, but given the exponential spread of the disease, the gap between it and the response was steadily growing. It was therefore urgent to scale up efforts considerably in order to close the gap. He urged all stakeholders to act on a large scale and as promptly as possible. For its part, the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response was mapping out the Organization's response. The disease had had a disproportionate impact on women and was increasingly affecting children. While no effort should be spared in attacking Ebola within the three worst-hit countries, it was imperative that the virus or fear of it not shut down travel or trade, given the potential economic repercussions for all. Screening at airports and preparation within countries to halt the spread of the disease were among the actions that could be taken in order to continue to allow the kinds of travel needed,

especially to bring health workers into those countries to defeat the virus.

50. **Ms. De Boer-Buquicchio** (Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography), introducing her first report as Special Rapporteur said that the renewal of the mandate reflected the concern of Member States about the increase in the sale and sexual exploitation of children and their commitment to continue to address that persistent scourge through the special procedures system. Since the creation of the mandate, the international community had consistently condemned all forms of the sale and sexual exploitation of children and adopted a number of international and regional instruments and measures to combat the phenomena. While significant progress had been made, millions of children continued to fall victim to various forms of sale and sexual exploitation worldwide, and prevailing violence and discrimination enhanced their vulnerability to victimization, especially in conflict situations.

51. She intended to mainstream the protection and promotion of children's rights within the United Nations special procedures system. In an effort to ensure the continuity of the work of her predecessors, her first thematic report would be devoted to the issue of information and communication technologies and sexual exploitation of children, with a focus on the potential for children to use those technologies to help combat those crimes. She would also work to advocate for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, she would conduct thematic studies on the consequences of the sale and sexual exploitation on child victims in order to propose comprehensive care to allow for their recovery and reintegration, with adequate focus on the public health dimension. Research on the demand underpinning the sale and sexual exploitation of children would serve to inform preventive policies. Other established methods of work under the special procedures system, including communications and country visits, would be maximized.

52. She had expressed a clear intention to work in close coordination with the relevant United Nations bodies and mechanisms that addressed violations of children's rights and had received positive responses from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Representative on Violence against Children

and UNICEF. She would also look to strengthen cooperation with relevant regional mechanisms.

53. The Special Rapporteur would continue to take a consultative and participatory approach to implementing her mandate, ensuring that children were heard, their views taken seriously and their participation in mandate activities ensured. The anniversaries of the establishment of her mandate and of the adoption of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography constituted benchmarks to determine what had been achieved and what remained to be done in order to eradicate those phenomena, underscoring the need for continued support and redoubled efforts from all actors in that regard.

54. **Ms. Sandberg** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that, as part of its celebrations of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of the Child had hosted a live online dialogue with children from 14 countries. The dialogue had shown that when adults and children communicated in a spirit of mutual respect, they could combine their ideas and produce innovative solutions to societal challenges. Children had expressed particular concern about violence, drawn attention to the need to raise awareness of its effects on them and proposed ways to prevent it.

55. There had been considerable improvements in the implementation of children's rights, including an increase in school enrolment, especially among girls, and more legislation and policies related to children's rights. Nevertheless, important challenges persisted, with millions of children suffering from negligence, violence, abuse and exploitation at home and elsewhere. She encouraged States to take timely measures to combat all violence against children and to invest in special protection programmes and strengthen existing child protection systems.

56. The rights of children with disabilities continued to be violated across the globe, requiring awareness-raising and other efforts from States to combat the stigma against those children and to ensure the inclusion of all children in school. Children who left their homeland, either voluntarily or by force, faced particular problems, as evinced by recent mass movements of unaccompanied children from Central America and Mexico to the United States of America.

The Committee expected States to take all necessary measures to prevent discrimination against migrant children and ensure respect for their rights under the Convention in origin, transit and destination countries.

57. While the main responsibility for violations of the rights of the millions of children caught in armed conflict situations rested with the parties to the conflict, the international community also had a responsibility to ensure that children's rights were protected and that the perpetrators of such violations were held accountable. The Committee had recommended that the General Assembly should conduct an international study on children deprived of their liberty. Such a study was needed to collect data in order to document the scale of the deprivation of the liberty of children, assess their situation in detention facilities and the implementation of applicable international standards, identify good practices at the national and international levels, reduce the number of children deprived of their liberty and put in place effective alternatives.

58. With regard to the treaty body strengthening process, the Committee was grateful that its need to extend its meeting time by three weeks per year to deal with its backlog had been acknowledged by the General Assembly. The additional time would allow the Committee to halve its backlog in 2015. The Committee had decided to offer States parties the option of a simplified reporting procedure in 2016 and to reduce the length of its concluding observations to try to make them more focused. From its sixty-fifth to its sixty-seventh session, the Committee had reviewed and adopted its concluding observations on 34 States parties' reports.

59. At its most recent session, the Committee had approved the text of the first-ever general comment between two Committees, developed jointly with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, on harmful practices. The text had been transmitted to that Committee for approval. Her Committee had also adopted working methods for the participation of children in the reporting process. In September 2014, it had held a day of general discussion on digital media and children's rights, focusing on the effects of children's engagement with information and communications technologies. Conclusions had addressed access to information and communications technologies for different groups of children, the importance of digital literacy, online

safety concerns and other issues. Children had been invited to participate and share their views before and during the event. Lastly, she reminded delegations that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the most widely ratified United Nations human-rights instrument and encouraged States that had not already ratified it and its three Optional Protocols to do so.

60. **Ms. Ribeiro** (Brazil) said that she would like to know what plans the Special Rapporteur had to promote the international exchange of best practices in preventing and combating the sale and exploitation of children. She also wondered how the Special Rapporteur intended to promote further regional cooperation and initiatives to increase the visibility of such efforts and promote their replication worldwide.

61. **Ms. Hamilton** (United States of America) said that her Government shared the priorities of the Special Rapporteur, including combating the sale and exploitation of children following humanitarian crises, increasing corporate social responsibility and advocating for the non-criminalization of child victims of sexual exploitation. It continued to forge partnerships with States and international organizations to address those issues worldwide. Her delegation was interested in the Special Rapporteur's methodology, which drew upon child participation to develop projects and policies, and it eagerly looked forward to the results of that process.

62. The United States also supported the Special Rapporteur's goal of replicating best practices around the world and looked forward to learning from the experience of other States in combating the sale of children domestically. She would like to know what measures the Special Rapporteur intended to take in order to convince Governments, civil society and the general population about the need to prevent the sexual exploitation of boys and to protect and rehabilitate male victims, in the light of the persistent misjudgement that only women and girls were vulnerable to such abuses.

63. **Mr. De León Huerta** (Mexico) said that Mexico looked forward to sharing the advances made on promoting children's rights with the Committee on the Rights of the Child during the presentation of its fourth and fifth combined periodic report in 2015. Measures taken by his Government in that regard included an amendment to the Constitution that had raised the minimum age for employment.

64. **Mr. Köhler** (Observer for the European Union) said that he would welcome more information on the areas in which the Special Rapporteur saw room for stronger collaboration with regional organizations and also wondered whether such collaboration would be a priority in her mandate. Welcoming the study on children deprived of liberty, he expressed concern at the difficulties facing children, including child poverty and inequality. In the light of the outstanding challenges surrounding enrolment in primary education and the attendant learning crisis caused by outdated curricula and shortages in appropriate learning materials, he asked how that the crisis should be addressed.

65. **Ms. Tavares** (Portugal) wondered, in light of the importance of mainstreaming the right to education as a tool to promote the rights of the child and to protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse, whether any cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education was foreseen and, if so, in which areas. What substantive criteria could be developed to govern the taking of action in specific situations in order to maximize the potential of communications as a prevention and protection tool of the special procedures system, and how might other mandate holders be involved in developing those criteria?

66. As the most widely ratified human rights treaty, the Convention of the Rights of the Child had undisputed authority, but considerable obstacles to implementation remained. She would like to know whether the Committee foresaw initiatives to further assist States parties in implementing its concluding observations. Welcoming initiatives to promote child participation, including online meetings in multiple languages, she asked the Chairperson to elaborate on other measures envisaged in that regard, especially in light of the recent entry into force of the third Optional Protocol to the Convention, which Portugal had been one of the first States to ratify.

67. **Ms. Murillo** (Costa Rica) expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to incorporate the suggestions made by Member States on ways to strengthen treaty bodies in the relevant resolution, in particular, simplifying the reporting procedure and making concluding observations briefer and more concrete.

68. **Ms. De Boer-Buquicchio** (Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) said that she intended to continue her predecessor's work on reducing the risk of sexual abuse and exploitation in the context of major sporting events. The successful collaboration between her predecessor and the Brazilian authorities during the recent World Cup hosted by that country could be replicated at major sporting events that Brazil would be hosting.

69. The Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, the outcome of the Third World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, had made it clear that there was a need to address, inter alia, the gaps in the legal framework, insufficient corporate responsibility, inadequate transnational cooperation and the imperative to address the demand factor. She would attend to those concerns in the follow up to the Declaration and in all subsequent activities carried out by her mandate.

70. She actively worked to foster the replication of best practices through country visits, during the course of which such practices were observed and compiled. While the number of girl victims of sexual abuse exceeded that of boys, she agreed that the latter should not be overlooked, hence the importance of ensuring the participation of all children in order to hear about and directly address their needs. In that regard, her forthcoming thematic report on the psychological and physical impact of sexual abuse and exploitation on children would employ a methodology encouraging child participation in formulating recovery and reintegration strategies, so as to involve boys in the process. Community-led approaches to combating sexual abuse should also include boys and encourage them to empower girls, particularly through education.

71. Cooperation and coordination with regional organizations and mechanisms were crucial to the success of her mandate, particularly on the issue of child and forced marriages, in response to the call of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa. The European Union strategy on the rights of the child could be aligned with the priorities established by her mandate. Her involvement with the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual

Exploitation and Sexual Abuse was another avenue for fruitful collaboration. With regard to communication criteria, the mandate holder had discretion to assess whether the information received met the substantive criteria for further action, taking into account the reliability of the source, the credibility of the information and the details provided. She would develop those guidelines further in coordination with her colleagues and in consultation with civil society.

72. **Ms. Sandberg** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that she looked forward to a constructive dialogue during the consideration of Mexico's forthcoming periodic report in June 2015. With regard to the learning crisis, it would be necessary to raise State awareness of such problems as outdated curricula and inadequately trained teachers, namely, through dialogue and in the Committee's concluding observations. For many countries, it was a question of prioritizing the use of resources for education to a greater extent than was currently the case. In the absence of funds, regional and international cooperation would be required to update curricula, train teachers and address other problems.

73. With regard to helping States implement recommendations, the Committee was working to make recommendations shorter, more specific and directly relevant to each State. The Committee could also give clearer priorities among the recommendations. Assistance was sometimes provided directly by Committee members invited to the country by the Government to discuss implementation. An indicator system was being developed to facilitate State party comprehension of Committee assessments, according to the rights protected by the Convention. General comments, handbooks and other guidance materials provided Governments with additional assistance.

74. Measures envisaged to promote child participation in the work of the Committee included extending invitations to children to attend children's meetings with Committee members held on the margins of the formal session and holding video conferences with children in countries under Committee review.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*