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Chair: Ms. Mesquita Borges (Timor-Leste)
later: Mr. Davis (Vice-Chair): (Jamaica)

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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** (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) (*continued*)

(b) **Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly** (A/69/182 and A/69/346) (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Sargsyan** (Armenia) said that the year 2015 would be a turning point, at which Member States would begin work on the next generation of development goals. It was important to incorporate gender equality and the empowerment of women in those goals, both as a stand-alone goal and as a cross-cutting target. Meanwhile, the international community should accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. While major progress towards gender equality had been made at the national and international level, much remained to be done in a number of areas, including the elimination of violence against women, the suppression of sex-selective abortion and the promotion of equality and reproductive health rights.

2. Armenia's Government had initiated executive and legislative actions on a wide spectrum of gender issues over the past two decades, in addition to taking measures to guarantee the rights of vulnerable groups of women. It had developed a strategy to address social protection for the elderly, including women, and had implemented a wide range of strategies and policies on gender issues. The Women's Council was responsible for monitoring the implementation of gender commitments within the framework of the national human rights system and an independent Ombudsman guaranteed women's rights and equality. His country had introduced gender quotas in the electoral code and had adopted a law on gender equality. The strengthening of national legislation in the area of trafficking in persons, particularly women, and the implementation of victim assistance programmes had led to Armenia's ranking in 2013 among the 30 most successful States in combating human trafficking. Armenia's adoption of a comprehensive refugee integration policy and related measures, in addition to donor support, had resulted in the successful integration of many female refugees and internally

displaced persons (IDPs) who had been driven from their homes during recent decades of war. In 2013, Armenia had adopted an action plan to address the needs of the recent influx of Syrian refugees.

3. On the global level, Armenia's Government had initiated a series of discussions with international stakeholders on sex-selective abortion and had been one of the first countries to submit its national review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Aware of the unfinished work in the area of gender equality, his delegation reiterated its commitment to the protection and fulfilment of women's rights, the effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the shaping of a gender-inclusive post-2015 agenda.

4. **Mr. Mahmaminov** (Tajikistan), underscoring the importance of eliminating violence against women as the key to ensuring gender equality, said that Tajikistan had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 2014. His country was implementing a policy to eliminate discrimination against women and conducting social reforms aimed at the consolidation of gender equality guarantees. Tajikistan had adopted a law and established a national programme on the prevention of family violence. The Ministry of Internal Affairs had established inspection units to combat domestic violence, while the Academy of Internal Affairs had introduced an optional course on domestic violence prevention in its curriculum. Information and consultation centres established with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) had helped to strengthen national and local capacity in the area of gender equality.

5. While the advancement of laws on gender equality represented encouraging progress, efforts should be focused on their implementation. To that end, the Government was cooperating closely with a coalition of public associations to translate de jure equality into de facto equality. Cognizant of the importance of economic empowerment for promoting gender equality, Tajikistan had developed a vocational training programme and a programme to promote specialized skills training and employment opportunities for women. It had supported initiatives to

support entrepreneurship and reduce female poverty through the issuance of micro-loans and had raised the legal marriage age from 17 to 18 years in an effort to promote women's education and self-reliance and to implement the relevant provision of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Tajikistan was paying special attention to improving health services, notably by pursuing awareness-raising initiatives and developing a legal and normative framework in the area of women's health, including their sexual and reproductive health. While encouraged by the focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in the debates of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and supporting the consideration of a wide spectrum of gender issues in the development of those goals, she noted that progress towards their achievement would be slow in the absence of adequate financial resources, investment and access to innovative technologies.

6. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that full development could not be achieved without the empowerment of women, which was a priority area for his Government. Bangladesh's national policy for women's advancement had increased their participation in all areas of life. Ranked seventh in the world in the area of women's political empowerment, Bangladesh had experienced women's leadership for over 20 years and Bangladeshi women enjoyed significant representation in Parliament and in national and local government. One prestigious public university had recently appointed Bangladesh's first woman vice-chancellor.

7. In the public sector, 10 per cent of jobs were reserved for women, with additional quotas for those with disabilities or belonging to ethnic minorities, and maternity leave had been extended to six months. Special credit facilities and micro-finance loans for women had contributed to a quadrupling in the number of female entrepreneurs since 2009. Garment manufacturing, the main export industry, was dominated by women, and female leadership benchmarks were being established across the corporate sector, academia, civil society organizations and the media. The 28 per cent rise in women's overall labour force participation since 2000 was a notable achievement.

8. Bangladesh's status as a champion country in the Global Education First Initiative was a testament to the power of free education to empower women and combat gender-based violence, early marriage and

extremist views that hampered women's social mobility. Seventy-five per cent of recipients of national education assistance were girls and Bangladesh had established significant numbers of vocational training centres for women in a wide range of professional areas.

9. Bangladesh's inclusion of women's empowerment as a cross-cutting target throughout all development policies should serve as a guide for future undertakings in that area. The global community should seize the opportunity to strengthen advocacy, political will and sustained global partnership and to ensure the implementation of commitments to women's empowerment. Noting the demonstrated ineffectiveness of global military expenditure for enhancing security, Bangladesh called upon the international community to divert a portion of that expenditure towards efforts for women's empowerment.

10. **Ms. Karabaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that sustainable development could not be achieved without the advancement of women, especially in rural areas, and that gender equality was essential for building democratic societies. Her country's new Constitution, adopted after the revolution of 2010, proclaimed Kyrgyzstan a socially oriented state, and the section on human rights and freedoms had been commended by the European Commission for Democracy through Law. Kyrgyzstan was strongly committed to implementing the commitments contained in the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other relevant international instruments. Kyrgyzstan had completed a national review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which would serve as a guide for further targeted action in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. It would continue to support the work of UN-Women, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Population and Development in furthering gender equality.

11. Women's participation was key to ensuring food security, eliminating poverty in rural areas and promoting the well-being of families, but women continued to face discrimination. National policies that focused specifically on the protection of women, including a national strategy for achieving gender equality by 2020 and a plan of action for the

implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), had yielded significant progress. Kyrgyzstan had developed gender-sensitive legislation in accordance with the main international human rights conventions, in addition to laws that guaranteed equal opportunities and rights for women and protected them against domestic violence. Women's representation in decision-making had increased, and Kyrgyzstan now ranked fiftieth in the world in terms of women parliamentarians. Legislation aimed at combating gender-based violence had been strengthened to provide victims with free and confidential psychological and legal aid and, when necessary, an escort to medical facilities. Progress towards combating domestic violence would have been impossible without the development of gender-disaggregated data.

12. Fair access to land, markets, finance and technology, together with economic and social issues affecting women's rights, particularly in rural areas, would remain a priority for Kyrgyzstan over the next five years. Her country remained committed to improving opportunities for women and strengthening international cooperation in that area. The year 2015 would be crucial for reviewing relevant international commitments and ensuring that the experience gained would effectively guide the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda.

13. **Ms. Kadra Ahmed Hassan** (Djibouti) said that her country's Constitution guaranteed gender equality. In view of the upcoming formulation of the post-2015 development agenda and review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, her Government was more aware than ever of the need to integrate a focus on women's rights and participation in sustainable development policies. Djibouti's accession to all relevant regional and international human rights instruments attested to its commitment to gender-inclusive development.

14. For over a decade, Djibouti had prioritized gender equality and had adopted a number of laws and policies, including a national strategy for the integration of women in development; a family code establishing 18 years as the minimum age for marriage; a law establishing quotas for women in elective and high-level Government positions; the strengthening of the status and mandate of the former Government ministry on gender inequality, now the Ministry for the Advancement of Women; and a national gender policy.

Those measures should serve as a frame of reference for the work of development actors in Djibouti for the period 2013-2017.

15. Women's representation in Parliament and local government had increased markedly since 1998. Their participation in decision-making and access to justice were a priority in Government efforts to promote transparent, inclusive and participatory governance. With respect to education, a vital factor in the realization of women's rights, Djibouti had witnessed an increase in girls' school enrolment at all levels since 2000 and had achieved virtually equal levels of attendance between boys and girls at the primary level. Economic and cultural factors had nonetheless contributed to the perpetuation of discriminatory views on girls' education, which were being addressed through such initiatives as a national girls' education day; scholarships for girls; food distribution to rural families with daughters enrolled in school; the establishment of cafeterias and dormitories in rural areas; and the adoption of an informal literacy and education strategy.

16. Gender-based violence, the most widespread global scourge, was often rooted in social discrimination, economic inequality and poverty. Government efforts had focused primarily on raising awareness of laws and other measures aimed at protecting women, including a legal handbook and a legal aid law designed to reduce prohibitive legal costs for women. Female genital mutilation was the most widespread form of gender-based violence in Djibouti and must therefore be combated by all actors in society. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the relevant education initiative undertaken by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Legal provisions prohibiting the practice had led to a 5 per cent decline in its prevalence, and in 2013 Djibouti had hosted a subregional conference on the banning of all forms of genital mutilation.

17. While positive gains had been made, strengthened international cooperation was necessary to remove the remaining barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment. To that end, global financial support for UN-Women, including adequate funding from the United Nations regular budget, was crucial. Djibouti reiterated its ongoing commitment to promoting the rights of women, calling for closer cooperation with UN-Women.

18. **Mr. Valli** (Monaco) said that progress towards the advancement of women had been too slow and uneven, noting the unacceptably high proportion of women who were victims of gender-based violence, discrimination or forced marriage or who lacked access to education. Monaco fully supported both the mainstreaming of gender equality and its inclusion as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda, which should be defined in accordance with international human rights obligations and incorporate strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms for all development actors, including the most vulnerable among them.

19. The year 2015 would be a crucial time for assessing progress towards the advancement of women. Specifically, the international community must make greater efforts to protect women from sexual violence in conflict situations. To that end, Monaco firmly supported the United Kingdom's Call to Action to End Violence against Women and Girls in Emergencies and underlined the urgency of ending impunity for such acts of violence. Efforts must also be made to promote fuller participation of women in prevention, mediation and resolution of conflicts. Women's access to quality education, and particularly secondary education, was essential to realizing their full potential and participation in development and to preventing early marriage.

20. With regard to health, the UNFPA report had recalled the importance of efforts to eradicate obstetric fistula. The need to ensure universal access to appropriate, affordable and quality health care for women and girls had been emphasized in the Beijing Platform for Action, but access to basic health services remained unequal. For Monaco, the advancement of women was a key priority of national and international policy. Monaco had recently ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and continued to provide annual financial contributions to UN-Women.

21. **Mr. Tupouniua** (Tonga) said that his country was determined to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Tonga recognized and was committed to overcoming the barrier that gender-based violence posed to the realization of women's rights and overall development, including the fulfilment of a number of the Millennium

Development Goals. The Samoa Pathway adopted in September 2014 reaffirmed the critical importance of gender equality and women's empowerment by calling for, inter alia, the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence, the mainstreaming of gender in sustainable development priority areas, and equal access for women to education, healthcare and participation in decision-making. His delegation welcomed the work of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in promoting women's empowerment and supported the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005-2015.

22. Recognizing the importance of education in accomplishing gender parity, his country had achieved similar literacy rates for women and men and near equal rates of secondary education attainment. It aimed to extend that parity to all sectors of society by adopting a revised gender and development policy. Tonga had hosted a dialogue that focused on reducing barriers to women's leadership and increasing the impact of women parliamentarians, which had been followed by a meeting of more than 25 regional female members of Parliament to discuss the strengthening of women's community consultation and advocacy skills. Tonga would continue to implement its international commitments regarding gender equality and women's rights and echoed the call for a gender-inclusive post-2015 development agenda.

23. **Ms. Christensen** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that, although the Millennium Development Goals had resulted in significant progress for women and girls, critical gaps remained, notably in the areas of maternal health and access to sanitation. The Goals had a limited focus on gender equality and women's empowerment, and discrimination and violence against women hampered their full achievement. In that regard, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) welcomed the proposal to include a stand-alone gender goal with targets for ending gender-based violence in the outcome document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

24. IFRC also welcomed the critical links between gender and health established in the Agreed Conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-eighth session, which had also

highlighted the slow and uneven progress made towards Millennium Development Goal 5, particularly in poor and rural areas. Greater efforts and resources were needed to combat the suffering of women and girls resulting from unequal access to basic health information, prevention services and treatment.

25. A range of global initiatives had recently emerged to address the needs of women and girls at risk of violence in emergency situations. Those initiatives needed to be supported by greater investment in and attention to gender and violence prevention mainstreaming in emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Gender-based violence in emergency situations was predictable and preventable, and preemptive action should be taken to engage women and girls in all preparedness, response and recovery efforts. Response efforts should be better informed by analysis based on sex- and age-disaggregated data and direct consultations with women. A greater focus on violence prevention must also be integrated in local disaster risk-reduction initiatives.

26. IFRC and its national societies were devoting greater attention to violence, gender equality and diversity in their disaster response, training courses and community-based programming. As first responders in emergencies, they were well-positioned to work with international stakeholders and local communities to develop local solutions to address violence. IFRC had developed global tools to address violence in local initiatives, including a violence prevention module launched in collaboration with the Canadian Red Cross that was being used by over 15 national societies. IFRC would continue its mapping of community-level projects related to sexual and gender-based violence in emergencies, and results would serve as a guide for future work.

27. In their frequent roles as victims, healthcare workers and care-givers, women were on the frontlines of health emergencies such as the recent outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in West Africa. Women must therefore be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. IFRC called upon all stakeholders to accelerate their prevention and care efforts, with a view to ensuring fewer deaths and eradicating the disease. IFRC reiterated its commitment to promoting care, respect and dignity for individuals and communities in emergencies.

28. **Ms. Tougas** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross) said that, although women were not inherently vulnerable in situations of armed conflict and could assume a variety of roles, they were at disproportionate risk in those situations. Despite the protections afforded them under international humanitarian law, armed conflict impeded women's access to health care, food and water. In-depth assessments were therefore essential to understand and respond to the needs of women, particularly displaced women and girls and women heads of household, who were at particular risk of sexual violence.

29. Sexual violence was fully prohibited by international humanitarian law in all armed conflict situations, but was frequently used as a deliberate war tactic with grave and dehumanizing consequences. Its widespread prevalence and damaging effects were frequently invisible owing to underreporting as a consequence of cultural taboos, feelings of shame or fear of retaliation on the part of victims, which posed a serious challenge to humanitarian response efforts. A proactive and multidisciplinary approach, based on an assumption of the concomitance of sexual violence and armed conflict, was therefore necessary to respond to sexual violence. Unimpeded and timely access to medical, psychological and psychosocial care for victims must be ensured by all parties to conflict.

30. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) called on Member States to enhance their capacity to respond to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of all victims of sexual violence, notably by providing appropriate medical, psychological, psychosocial, economic and legal assistance. Preventative measures, including the initiation of dialogue with parties to conflict and the introduction of simple but effective risk-reduction mechanisms, must likewise be taken. The ICRC frequently helped to develop locally-adapted risk-reduction strategies for women, such as digging wells close to villages. It had also distributed food supplies to women heads of households to limit their vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

31. States nevertheless bore primary responsibility for ending sexual violence. They must continue to domesticate relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and combat impunity through the adoption and enforcement of domestic legislation criminalizing sexual violence. Such measures would

only be effective if States addressed major systemic shortcomings that hindered efforts to eliminate sexual violence. Effective investigation, prosecution and punishment mechanisms should ensure the accountability of perpetrators, and guarantee that victims could receive support without fear of reprisal, stigma or protracted procedures. Sexual violence was not inevitable and could be prevented. ICRC was prepared to work with all Member States and all components of the ICRC Movement to implement the commitment undertaken by all Member States at the thirty-first International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to strengthen their legal systems in an effort to prevent and address sexual violence.

32. **Mr. Gaddi** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the Order of Malta was active in over 30 African countries. It had implemented numerous health, educational, agricultural and social projects and, through its relief agency, Malteser International, had assisted some 50,000 women traumatized by violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Nairobi, the agency had set up clinics and hospitals for HIV-positive pregnant women and children, and had trained staff who had cared for over 24,000 HIV/AIDS patients over the past year. The agency had supported a project in which underprivileged young African women and girls earned a living from the sale of handmade clothing, while in South Sudan, it had helped build a secondary school for young girls.

33. The international community should continue to work towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals related to improving maternal health, empowering women, and combating HIV/AIDS. The Order of Malta looked forward to further exchange and collaboration in the efforts to strengthen the position of women and girls.

34. **Mr. Cassidy** (Observer for the International Labour Organization) said that the world of work was an excellent entry point for measures to address gender-based violence. The labour standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO) provided guidance for action to eliminate gender-based violence, while ILO conventions contained provisions to improve sexual harassment-related law and practice and ensure the protection of indigenous and other vulnerable workers. The recently adopted Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, and ILO Recommendation No. 203 created specific obligations

to prevent forced labour, protect its victims and provide access to remedies. With the support of various Member States and partner organizations, ILO had also launched the Fair Recruitment Initiative to address regulatory and enforcement gaps, improve complaint mechanisms, facilitate dialogue, and ensure the implementation of standard recruitment practices.

35. The ILO Better Work programme provided training for managers, supervisors and workers to prevent and address sexual harassment, while the development of social protection floors, promoted by the United Nations system as a whole, presented an avenue for remedial action. Guaranteeing basic income in the form of social transfers and providing universal access to affordable social services was a means of addressing poverty, reducing women's vulnerability and providing victims with critical assistance.

36. ILO had identified four areas for action to eliminate gender-based violence in the workplace: effective labour laws and enforcement mechanisms, consistent legislation, the removal of obstacles to women's access to justice, and a sharper focus on the informal economy. ILO was improving data collection and enhancing national capacities to inform future action. With sound knowledge to support evidence-based arguments, declarations and policies on gender equality, the international community could effect real change in the lives of many working women.

37. **Ms. Flejzor** (Observer for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) supported the call for a more ambitious approach to addressing gender equality in the post-2015 development agenda. Maternal and chronic malnutrition topped the list of priorities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Women required greater access to productive resources and opportunities to earn income, break out of poverty and participate as equal members of society.

38. Gender disparities in land holdings were still evident. The Gender and Land Rights Database provided the latest information on factors that influenced the realization of women's land rights. With an expanded version of the database due for launch in November 2014, FAO would continue to work with other countries to include gender-relevant statistics, which were critical for the measurement and verification of goals, targets and indicators in the post-2015 development agenda.

39. Farmer Field Schools, an FAO initiative that integrated the social, environmental and economic pillars of sustainable development, had been training women in farming techniques, and had proven particularly successful in Africa. The Organization had also been helping women with access to microcredit in the fisheries sector and increasing their participation in decision-making in mountain communities. In forest-dependent communities, women were trained in marketing and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. The international community was invited to further reflect on how to achieve gender equality in rural farming at the World Food Day observance event to take place later that month.

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

(a) **Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (*continued*) (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** (*continued*) (A/69/258)

40. **Ms. Bernadel** (Haiti) said that the 2010 earthquake had severely compromised her country's ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; yet, with bilateral and multilateral support, in particular from UNICEF, her Government was determined to catch up in all areas, including in the promotion of the rights of children. Haiti's efforts in that area had already been recognized in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (S/2014/617).

41. Among recent efforts to strengthen the legal framework for child protection, Haiti had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Her Government was also taking action to combat extreme poverty and social exclusion. Haiti's free education programme had allowed over 1.2 million children to attend school in 2011, and school attendance rates among young people aged from 15 to 24 years were the highest in the country's history.

42. **Mr. Al-Bakhayit** (Kuwait) said that all international actors must make a commitment to protecting children in armed conflict situations. Under

Kuwaiti law, the family was the foundation of society, and children were protected from exploitation, abuse and neglect, and strict penalties were imposed on perpetrators. Specialized institutions provided early education, shelter, and recreational services to children. A family care directorate attended to adolescents affected by family breakdown.

43. A party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two optional protocols and other relevant international instruments, Kuwait provided its citizens with extensive health care coverage and primary, secondary and tertiary education. Government measures had resulted in a reduction in under-five child mortality. By 2013, ninety-eight per cent of Kuwaiti students had completed elementary school.

44. In closing, he expressed concern over the situation of Palestinian children subject to ongoing violations by Israeli occupying forces. Israeli incursions in the Gaza Strip had resulted in the deaths of 2100 Palestinians, 530 of them children. For its part, Kuwait would spare no effort in continuing to promote the rights of children in international forums.

45. *Mr. Davis (Jamaica), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

46. **Mr. Diyar Khan** (Pakistan) said that his Government's allocation of two per cent of gross domestic product to education was expected to increase to four per cent by 2018. The Government anticipated achieving 91 per cent net primary enrolment and a gender parity index of 0.95. The National Plan of Action on Education sought to increase enrolment, decrease early school leaving and improve the quality of education with the use of new technologies.

47. The Prime Minister was personally directing the national anti-polio campaign to ensure that it received priority funding and attention. With the involvement of security forces, and religious and community leaders, and the assistance of the United Arab Emirates, three million children had been vaccinated over a three-month period. Over 90 per cent of the country was polio-free and poliovirus type 3 had been completely eradicated. The Government was working vigorously to deal with the remaining pockets.

48. To eliminate all forms of child labour, Pakistan had implemented legislation and established child complaint desks and protection and rehabilitation centres. Pakistan was one of the initiators of the 1990 World Summit for Children, and had been an early

signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It had also ratified the optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, all International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on child labour, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention on Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution. The National Commission for Child Welfare and Development worked closely with UNICEF to assess and promote children's rights in Pakistan. A comprehensive child protection bill was also under consideration. Pakistan remained committed to fully realizing the rights of children at the national and international levels.

49. **Mr. Shava** (Zimbabwe) said that, since his country's accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, his Government had launched a number of initiatives, including cash transfers for families and the Basic Education Assistance Module, which ensured that disadvantaged children, in particular girls and children with disabilities, could attend school. Such programmes had enabled Zimbabwe to achieve gender parity at the primary and secondary school levels.

50. The National Reproductive Health Policy focused, inter alia, on good nutrition, maternal health and child well-being, and the prevention of childhood diseases and mother-to-child transmission of HIV. A successful immunization drive had resulted in the near eradication of many childhood illnesses. Children orphaned by the HIV/AIDS epidemic were protected by the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, and the National Child Survival Strategy ensured cohesive national action.

51. The junior national parliament had enabled children to engage with national legislators and Government ministers on relevant issues, culminating in the submission of priority issues for consideration in the 2014 national budget. There were several laws with provisions to protect children, while victim friendly courts facilitated children's access to justice.

52. To combat sexual violence, including against children, the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development had launched the National Campaign against Rape and Sexual Abuse. Much more remained to be done to promote and protect the rights of children. His Government hoped that the needs of

children would receive the attention that they deserved in the post-2015 development agenda.

53. **Mr. Shaharis** (Malaysia) said that Malaysia had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the first two optional protocols. Malaysia's 2001 Child Act was based on the principles of the Convention and provided for the care, protection and rehabilitation of children without discrimination. Two further policies that focused on child development and the protection of children from all forms of violence had also been approved.

54. International partnerships were needed urgently to address the root causes of violence against children and establish mechanisms to stem and prevent such violence. Child abuse services had been set up in major hospitals throughout Malaysia and the Government had also established a dedicated hotline. Furthermore, a nationwide alert system was activated when a child under the age of 12 years was reported missing.

55. As a recently elected non-permanent member to the Security Council, Malaysia intended to focus on a number of issues, including children in armed conflict. He hoped that the Children, Not Soldiers campaign would succeed in ending the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016.

56. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka) said that his country had taken first place on the child-friendliness index in the South Asian region, with high scores in the areas of health, education and child protection. Citizens were guaranteed equal treatment under the Constitution, which had special provisions for the advancement of women, and for children and persons with disabilities. There was also legislation to safeguard those vulnerable to domestic violence, judicial reforms to protect children, including those in detention, measures to eliminate child labour and provisions to address child trafficking. Children's rights had also been incorporated into the national action plan for human rights.

57. Sri Lanka was a party to seven core human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two optional protocols, and the two International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on child labour. In 2011, a survey was carried out to identify vulnerable children. A 24-hour helpline was available, and a network of officials had been trained to deal with child abuse cases and to provide socio-

psychological protection. Furthermore, in partnership with UNICEF, the Government provided resources to improve the judicial process for victims of child abuse.

58. Sri Lanka had a well-connected child protection network. The family health care system had achieved low infant and maternal mortality rates and nationwide immunization, while the birth registration rate had reached 92 per cent. School attendance was compulsory until the age of 14 years and education was free of charge, while supplementary welfare measures provided free healthcare, midday meals, text books and scholarships. Children in rural areas had the same opportunities as their counterparts in urban areas, and teacher training programmes had been established in both rural and urban schools.

59. As a result of development programmes in former conflict zones, over 1,020 schools had been rebuilt, while foster parent programmes supported children who had lost one or both parents. Awareness-raising programmes had been launched to inform children and their parents of such services. All child combatants who had surrendered to government forces had been rehabilitated and reintegrated into society and were continuing their education.

60. Despite its successes, Sri Lanka faced many challenges, including the prevalence of child malnutrition and child abuse through social media. The 2006 amendment to the penal code prohibited cybercrimes, including sexual abuse and child pornography. His delegation welcomed the efforts made by various United Nations entities to improve the lives of children around the globe.

61. **Mr. Winid** (Poland) said that the protection and promotion of children's rights remained a priority for his country, which had initiated the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, despite the universally shared values of the Convention, millions of children continued to suffer from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The United Nations should therefore continue to create mandates for special rapporteurs and representatives on children's issues.

62. Turning the rights secured in the Convention into reality required legal measures and a transformed mindset. His Government would concentrate its efforts on preventing all forms of violence against children and on sharing best practices and lessons learned at the national and regional levels.

63. **Ms. Velichko** (Belarus) said that 25 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the world had a long way to go to guarantee all children a safe and happy childhood. Child protection was a fundamental policy priority for Belarus, which had been ranked among the top 40 countries according to the children's index of Save the Children. The country's National Commission on the Rights of the Child coordinated State policy on the protection of children's rights, and the rights of the child, human rights and international humanitarian law were part of the curriculum at all levels of education. Government efforts to develop the education system were based on the principles of compulsory and free basic education and universal access to both preschool and vocational education. Currently, all children attended preschool and primary school. With regard to health, Belarus' infant and child mortality rates were among the lowest worldwide, thanks to the modernization of birthing centres and hospitals and a State policy of free immunization.

64. As for efforts to prevent and combat violence against children, Belarus had launched an information campaign for violence-free nurseries and established a mechanism to protect children in inappropriate living conditions. Belarus was also active in the Child Friendly Cities initiative, with five of its 20 participating cities designated as child friendly. In November 2014, her country would host a regional UNICEF conference on strengthening national mechanisms to protect children from violence and exploitation. Its collaboration with the Fund also included international technical projects to prevent injuries among children. Recognizing the role of UNICEF in protecting children with disabilities, she hoped that the Fund would continue to expand its cooperation with Belarus and looked forward to receiving the draft country programme for 2016-2020.

65. **Mr. Thórsson** (Iceland) said that much had been achieved since the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and urged States that had not yet ratified the Convention to do so. The basic right of children to be registered at birth was protected by the Convention. Birth registration established the child's legal existence and provided the foundation for safeguarding many of the child's other rights. Nevertheless, the births of nearly 230 million children under the age of five had never been officially recorded. National actors and Governments bore a

primary responsibility in that regard. Countries dealing with armed conflict made up the majority of countries with the lowest birth registration, a situation further compounded by the fact that nearly half of the world's forcibly displaced people were children. Those children were at a greater risk of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, trafficking, forced military recruitment and separation from their families. Iceland had supported the draft goal on the rule of law in the post-2015 development agenda process in order to address violence against children and to ensure that all births were registered.

66. Turning to gender equality, he underscored that men and boys must also be engaged on the issue. The Barbershop Conference would aim to mobilize men and boys in the fight for gender equality by inviting them to discuss masculinity and gender equality with other men and boys. Without the engagement of all of society on the issue, it would be impossible to achieve gender equality.

67. **Ms. Alofia** (Oman) said that her country's efforts to protect children and promote their rights included the enactment of a law on children that guaranteed children's civil, health, educational and economic rights and made provision for care and rehabilitation for children with disabilities. The best possible educational, social and cultural services must be provided to children, particularly during the important period of early childhood.

68. Oman had acceded to several international instruments on the rights of children, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two optional protocols. It had established a committee to follow up on progress in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, her Government's periodic reports to the Human Rights Council provided a clear picture of the situation of children in Oman. The country's efforts had met with international approval, as reflected in the reports of international organizations on childhood in Oman.

69. **Mr. Al-Khayarin** (Qatar) said that the grim realities of increased violence against and trafficking in children, especially girls, could yet be overcome if Governments, civil society, schools and families mustered the requisite political will. Qatar had taken steps to strengthen human rights, especially those of children. A party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two optional protocols, Qatar had

established several governmental and non-governmental institutions that protected children and other groups vulnerable to domestic and other violence, promoted early education and provided educational, social and health services for children with special needs.

70. His Government's Education above All initiative aimed to provide educational opportunities for children, especially in poverty- and conflict-stricken societies. Its Educate a Child initiative sought to achieve progress towards ensuring universal primary education worldwide. The human development pillar of the Qatar National Vision 2030 pertained to children insofar as it provided for developing their capacities and equipping them with skills to contribute to building society.

71. Stressing the need to protect the economic, social and civil rights of adolescents, he called for a careful examination of the legality of juvenile detention and for that practice to be avoided except as a last resort, and for the shortest possible period. In that connection, his delegation endorsed the call for a global study on children deprived of their freedom, with a view to formulating the necessary recommendations in that regard. Lastly, priority must be given to the poorest and weakest children and to protecting all children from violence in the post-2015 development agenda.

72. **Mr. Abdrakhmanov** (Kazakhstan) said that his delegation fully supported the work of UNICEF, including its continuous participation in assessing the implementation of the MDGs, establishing development objectives to protect children in the post-2015 agenda and improving mechanisms for assessing child poverty indicators. He underscored his country's regional cooperation with UNICEF. Significant progress had been made at the national level towards implementing the MDGs, including in the areas of universal primary education and gender equality in education. Kazakhstan had also strengthened its capacities for conducting evaluations and collecting birth and death data, and the goal to reduce child mortality would be achievable by 2015.

73. UNICEF and Kazakhstan's Human Rights Ombudsman were working together to analyse legislation and complaints of torture and violence against children in the context of juvenile justice. A dedicated ombudsman for children's rights would be established shortly.

74. Government entities were actively involved in efforts to prevent child neglect and homelessness and juvenile delinquency, and a unified integrated database of minors in difficult situations had been established. Advocacy to combat child abuse continued, with the launch of research on violence and introduction of a wide-reaching prevention programme. National legislation on the foreign adoption of children had been brought in line with the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. A council of non-governmental organizations had been established within the Committee on the Protection of Children of the Ministry of Education and Science, in order to ensure interaction between Government and non-governmental agencies on children's issues and to monitor compliance with relevant laws. Departments for the protection of children's rights had been established throughout the country.

75. Under his Government's strategic plan for 2011-2015, alternative forms of care for children without parents and rural children had been developed, and new forms of family education, protection and adoption had been introduced. Efforts to educate families and children on the Convention of the Rights of the Child had also been undertaken in cooperation with civil society. Special attention was being paid to the needs of children with disabilities to ensure access to high-quality distance education, when necessary.

76. Kazakhstan was committed to eliminating the worst forms of child labour and to strengthening the capacities of partner countries to deliver basic services to children, including universal birth registration, free health care, free and compulsory primary education and vocational training, without discrimination. Despite the progress achieved, continued efforts were needed. Ultimately, the responsibility for upholding the rights of children rested not only with Governments, but also with parents and other family members, teachers and other persons who dealt with children in an official capacity.

77. **Mr. Scappini Ricciardi** (Paraguay) said that his country's Constitution enshrined children's rights to development and to protection from neglect and abuse. Over a third of the population of Paraguay was made up of children and adolescents — a demographic bonus that represented both a challenge and an opportunity. Children from rural and poor urban areas and indigenous children were particularly vulnerable to

mistreatment, violence, child labour, trafficking in persons and homelessness. Measures to improve the situation of children at risk were being taken under the country's national development plan for 2014-2030, whose goals included poverty eradication, reduction of chronic child malnutrition and maternal mortality, and expansion of secondary education. In closing, he welcomed the efforts of UNICEF in Paraguay and, in particular, the recently adopted country programme, which had been formulated in cooperation with the competent national authorities.

78. **Mr. Lasso Mendoza** (Ecuador) said that his Government accorded priority to the rights of children, whose interests must be paramount. Their rights had been incorporated into the Constitution in 2008. The family and society must promote the full development of children and ensure the exercise of their rights. State policy, under the national development plan, aimed to promote and protect those rights. In 2007, his Government had undertaken a campaign to eradicate child labour, one of the more harmful repercussions of neoliberalism. Another such effect was the failure to provide basic services for migrant children. In that regard, Ecuador called on destination countries to fulfil their obligations to respect the human rights of all children, regardless of their migratory status.

79. While a great deal remained to be done to achieve that task, his country had made historic progress, particularly in the areas of health and education. In recent years, Ecuador had made vigorous efforts to strengthen early childhood care and development, as an important step towards breaking the cycle of poverty and reducing inequality. The strategy included specialized care, improvements in data management, and human resources training. The participation of families and communities was an integral part of the strategy, which capitalized on the country's cultural diversity. In closing, he called for the post-2015 development agenda to include comprehensive early childhood care in order to maximize positive outcomes.

80. **Ms. Mansouri** (Algeria) regretted that despite international efforts to protect children, their recruitment and use in armed conflicts persisted in many regions of the world. Algeria reiterated its support for the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. Expressing concern over the continued detention of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories by Israeli security forces and their prosecution in juvenile

military courts, she called for Israel to be held accountable for its crimes, including the recent military aggression that had targeted thousands of civilians and vital infrastructure, including a school administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

81. Progress towards protecting children from violence had been too slow and fragmented, with the risk of violence ever present. Data and research were crucial in making violence against children visible, challenging its social acceptance and understanding its causes. In that connection, she welcomed the holding of a high-level panel on ways and means of accelerating global efforts to end violence against children.

82. Algeria had ratified all major international instruments for the promotion of children's rights and had introduced national legislation to ensure more effective protection of those rights. It had also adopted a national strategy for the family, a national plan for child protection and a national strategy to combat violence against children, in collaboration with UNICEF. Her country was fighting to eradicate child labour and prostitution, all forms of trafficking, and the use of information and communications technology to disseminate child pornography. The Algerian penal code severely punished all forms of violence against children, including sexual abuse and exploitation.

83. Her Government's increased investment in health, including the implementation of national immunization programmes, had led to a reduction in infant mortality, from 34.7 per thousand in 2006 to 25.5 per thousand in 2013, as well as improved medical care. Education was non-discriminatory, free and compulsory for children up to 16 years of age. Algeria had reached the Education for All enrolment goal for the 2012/13 school year with a 97.96 per cent enrolment rate.

84. **Archbishop Auza** (Observer for the Holy See) said that in 2013 alone, armed conflict had affected the lives of 250 million children under the age of five. Every conflict, epidemic and natural disaster had the potential to roll back the steady progress made in recent decades towards reducing child mortality and improving access to nutrition, safe water and education. It was even more tragic when such rollbacks were caused by man-made tragedies in which children were specifically targeted, victimized and instrumentalized. Millions of children had been killed

or maimed in recent years, and the recruitment of child soldiers persisted. Some children had even been forced to carry out suicide bombings. Moreover, too many children were denied the most fundamental right to life, with prenatal selection eliminating babies suspected of having disabilities or merely on account of their sex.

85. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was a laudable recognition of the fundamental rights and inherent dignity of every human person, setting out such fundamental principles as the protection of the rights of the child before and after birth, the family as the natural environment for the growth and education of children, and the right of the child to health care and education. Eradicating violence against children required States, Governments, civil society and religious communities to support the family and enable it to carry out its responsibilities. In that connection, his delegation attached great importance to the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. It also concurred that informed and engaged parents and caregivers should support and advise children on the use of the Internet and of information and communications technologies in order to ensure a safer experience. For its part, the Catholic Church would continue to work for the release of child soldiers and to assist in their education and reintegration into their families and societies, in addition to its long-standing efforts to guarantee food and education for children worldwide.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.