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Chair: Ms. Mesquita Borges (Timor-Leste)

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

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

(a) **Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (*continued*) (A/69/260, A/69/212, A/69/264, A/69/262, A/69/165 and A/69/166)

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

1. **Ms. Kohonen Sheriff**, (Deputy Head, New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), speaking on behalf of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, presented the summary report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the panel discussion on prevention and eliminating child, early and forced marriage (A/69/165) and the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage (A/69/166). The findings of the report and the panel discussion highlighted that the practice of child, early and forced marriage was a violation of international human rights norms and that it had a disproportionately negative impact on the capacity of women and girls to realize their full rights to health and education and hindered their role in economic, social and political life. It further exposed them to violence and exploitation due to the differences in age and power relations between them and their husbands. The root causes of the practice were gender inequality and traditional attitudes based on stereotypical views of women's roles and sexuality. Poverty and insecurity were key contributing factors.

2. The study and the panel had recommended steps to promote gender equality and to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in order to break the cycle of poverty and economic disempowerment, including the use of data analysis to identify communities in which girls were at high risk of child, early and forced marriage and to put in place targeted action to promote women's economic empowerment. Opportunities for discussion within communities on the benefits of delaying marriage could be effective in challenging cultural and social attitudes. Age-appropriate and culturally relevant education for women and girls on sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights could also be beneficial.

Women and girls should be empowered to recognize and exercise their rights in relation to marriage.

3. For those measures to be effective, States must ensure coordination between national and local government, human rights agencies and civil society organizations. Traditional and religious leaders could play an important role in preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage. The report highlighted the importance of ensuring appropriate safety and protection measures such as shelters, services and information on sexual and reproductive health. Given the socioeconomic causes and consequences of the practice, it would be important to include the elimination of child, early and forced marriage as a specific target in the post-2015 development agenda.

4. **Ms. Murillo Ruin** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that CELAC countries were strongly committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. Actions and policies related to children should take into account the best interest of the child and a gender perspective. As the world celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, significant progress could be noted in declining infant mortality and rising school enrolment, although global averages often masked growing inequalities in key indicators and millions of children were affected by sociopolitical crisis, armed conflict and natural disasters. CELAC encouraged all States to become parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols. CELAC supported the inclusion of the promotion and protection of the rights of children in the post-2015 development agenda, with particular focus on the poorest children and those with disabilities, indigenous children, children of African descent and migrant children and teenagers, since they were the most vulnerable and most at risk of violence and abuse. CELAC countries called on countries of transit and destination to promote the best interests of migrant children and to address irregular migration from a humanitarian standpoint.

5. The vulnerability of children in situations of trafficking, smuggling, sale for purposes of sexual exploitation, rape, abuse, sale of organs, sexual tourism and child pornography was deeply concerning. It was important to tackle the causes of poverty, inequality, discrimination and organized crime in a coordinated manner as indicated by the Special Rapporteur on the

sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The field missions conducted in some CELAC countries by the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children had been very useful in advancing the rights of children and reflecting on persisting challenges. CELAC countries were concerned by the risks associated with information and communication technologies and supported a multifaceted agenda for minimizing the risks.

6. As a region composed primarily of middle-income countries, CELAC members recognized that the rights of children were affected by poverty, inequality and social and cultural factors as well as global economic and political factors and natural disasters; consequently, they attached great importance to international cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation.

7. Responses to violence required a gender perspective in the areas of protection, prevention, social reintegration and efforts to combat impunity, with the State, the family and society all working closely together. The contribution of civil society to the State's efforts in favour of children should be recognized and consideration should be given to the role of the media in raising social awareness of the need to protect the rights of children.

8. **Ms. Riley** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), reaffirmed the Community's commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the outcome of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly. Impressive gains in children's rights had been made since the adoption of the Convention and children's lives had been improved worldwide. Many countries provided universal access to education. However, gaps remained and she thanked the United Nations Children's Fund and other development partners for their work in her region.

9. The Caribbean Community recognized that education played a key role in the right of each child to reach his or her fullest potential, noting that around half of all recent reductions in maternal and infant mortality and the decline in child labour among girls could be attributed to girls' education. However, despite the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by many states, some 126 million children continued to be denied their right to education.

10. The situation of the poorest and most marginalized children demanded particular attention. Persistent factors such as poverty, neglect, violence, undernutrition and lack of adequate health care impeded children's realization of their rights. Extreme poverty had a devastating effect on children's long-term development and child poverty had increased as a result of the economic crisis. The effects of the crisis were still present in Caribbean Community countries and they were obliged to reduce health, education and other public services in order to provide adequate social safety nets.

11. The Caribbean Community had developed a plan that would provide quality sexual and reproductive health care services to adolescents with a view to reducing adolescent pregnancy. Social protection mechanisms would be set up in order to prevent violence against adolescent girls and common legal standards were being adopted across the region. By 2019, Caribbean Community Governments intended to introduce the systematic exchange of knowledge, information and good practices on adolescent health.

12. The Community welcomed the decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to two champions of children's rights. Children's rights should certainly be borne in mind when crafting the post-2015 development agenda. Caribbean countries joined with others in renewing their commitment to ensuring that all children enjoyed their human rights.

13. **Mr. Kyaw Tint** (Myanmar), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the reports submitted under the present agenda item provided a useful basis for the Committee to reflect on, assess and further strengthen the protection and promotion of the rights of children. As it deliberated on the post-2015 development agenda, it had an opportunity to redouble its efforts to overcome inequities among the poorest and most vulnerable children.

14. ASEAN noted with concern the disproportionate concentration of extreme poverty among children in developing and least developed countries and it had developed strategies and action plans to tackle the problem in its region. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint of 2009 outlined strategies and targets to address the needs of vulnerable groups, including children, and it was complemented by a strategic framework and plan of action for social

welfare, family and children. Policy documents included a declaration on the enhancement of welfare and development of ASEAN women and children and a declaration against trafficking in persons, particularly women and children. A declaration addressed the issue of violence against women and children as an obstacle to achieving equality, peace and development and reflected collective efforts to strengthen legal and policy frameworks and institutional capacity to fight violence. It outlined a resolve to develop strategies in order to eliminate harmful practices that perpetuated gender stereotyping and violence.

15. ASEAN took pride in the progress made with regard to children's development in the region. It remained committed to mainstreaming the participation of children in regional programmes. At the third ASEAN Children's Forum in 2014, children had met to discuss wide-ranging issues including child migration, child labour, trafficking of children and quality education.

16. ASEAN welcomed collaboration between United Nations agencies, Member States and regional groups in moving the agenda on children forward. The Association engaged with United Nations agencies on issues concerning the rights of children and supported further cooperation with them, while stressing that each United Nations child protection mechanism should adhere to its mandate and respect the bilateral frameworks between Member States and United Nations country teams.

17. ASEAN reaffirmed its commitment to continue prioritizing the welfare of its children and it would continue to work towards a community that supported safe and healthy childhoods.

18. **Mr. Msosa** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that African countries continued to face challenges of political instability, economic and financial crisis, climate change and inadequate funding which made it difficult to provide the infrastructure services necessary to cater for the needs of children, particularly those with disabilities. In armed conflict situations, African children remained vulnerable as refugees or displaced persons, they witnessed acts of violence and suffered from being orphaned, killed, or deprived of education opportunities and the chance to enjoy their livelihoods and be part of a peaceful community. In that context, he welcomed the campaign of the Special

Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict "Children, not soldiers" launched in March 2014.

19. The well-being of Africa's children depended on the well-being of their families and communities and therefore interventions directed towards children must also take a family-centred approach. African states were convinced that children's rights, welfare and protection were at the core of human social development and they were committed to ensuring them in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Since adopting a common position on the rights of the child in 2001, African states had reviewed progress in 2007 in the light of which they had adopted the "Call for Accelerated Action on the Implementation of the Plan of Action towards Africa Fit for Children (2008-2012)". African states had launched a campaign to end child marriage since it perpetuated problems relating to health, lack of education, gender-based violence, abuse, exploitation, inadequate access to nutrition services and lack of participation in economic opportunities.

20. African States encouraged the international community to continue to coordinate its efforts to end all forms of violence against children. African children were vulnerable due to conflict, inequalities in income and wealth, unemployment, HIV and AIDS, Ebola, poverty, hunger, illiteracy and poor quality education, economic and financial crisis, climate change and restricted access to health services. It was therefore important to give consideration to the protection of children in the sustainable development framework.

21. Malawi was working with United Nations and other agencies in order to mitigate circumstances that children went through such as abuse, exploitation and human trafficking as a result of poverty. The Government was considering passing a law on marriage that raised the legal age to 18 years for both boys and girls. An improvement in the delivery of health services had led to a reduction in infant and child mortality rates. Other programmes included social cash transfers, a school feeding programme and the retention of children in school through distribution of food and edible oils. Child-friendly units in the police encouraged the report of abuse and the Government had embarked on child justice training of public and private officials. The Government of

Malawi looked forward to the continued assistance of its development partners.

22. **Mr. Shava** (Zimbabwe), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that all Member States of the Southern African Development Community had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and almost all had ratified the two optional protocols on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The promotion and protection of the human rights of children was an imperative for his region given that children and youth comprised the majority of the population. Poverty remained an underlying cause of child vulnerability; it prevented children from enjoying the most basic of human rights, including the right to education and to the highest attainable standard of health. It also hampered opportunities for economic and social advancement. Increased economic cooperation within the Southern African Development Community and the implementation of economic development programmes would contribute to eliminating poverty and thereby increase the capacity of families to provide a nurturing environment for children. Overall development would also augment the capacity of Governments in the region to implement policies that would ensure the well-being of children and provide the basic social protection for their families, thus curbing the intergenerational transfer of poverty. Southern African Development Community Member States had made progress in providing universal primary education although there was a need to improve secondary school retention rates and to expand access to tertiary education. The provision of skills education would respond to the needs of industry, thereby increasing opportunities for future employment.

23. Although the region had seen a fall in infant and under-fives mortality, persistently high rates were still caused by malnutrition and HIV/AIDS. Mother-to-child transmission of HIV had decreased but it was still a major underlying factor in many childhood diseases and deaths. Most SADC countries had achieved 50 per cent coverage in services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, although lagging access to antiretroviral treatment for children remained a matter of great concern.

24. Regional efforts to protect and promote the rights of children faced challenges as a result of the negative

legacy of HIV/AIDS, which had resulted in significant increases in the numbers of orphans, vulnerable children and youth. A strategic framework and business plan had been developed by the region in order to develop social frameworks for vulnerable children in SADC Member States. Social protection was an essential intervention in promoting the rights of children, in strengthening the capacity of families to fulfil their childcare roles and assisting children with disabilities, those living outside households and those living in child-headed households. General Assembly resolution 68/146 on the girl child urged support for child-headed households, and his region would continue to show leadership in promoting international engagement on that issue.

25. Child marriage remained a challenge in the quest for development for many children, particularly girls. Southern African Development Community countries reiterated their support for the African Union campaign to end child marriage. The region was committed to ending violence against children and to curbing trafficking in persons, especially women and children. SADC would continue to work tirelessly to promote and protect the rights of children and welcomed strategic partnerships from relevant stakeholders in pursuit of that aim.

26. **Ms. Schlyter** (European Union), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, the candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the stabilization and association process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, said that the situation of children all over the world was far from acceptable. Children made up one third of the world's population and were among the most vulnerable, needing special attention and protection.

27. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had made an important contribution to ensuring that children could live and grow in a good environment where they had access to education, health, nutrition, safety and security, although work on its implementation was far from over. The European Union was strongly committed to the Convention and its optional protocols and called on States Parties to withdraw any reservations to them. The European Union further encouraged all States to ratify the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure.

28. The European Union, with partners from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries, had introduced a draft resolution on the rights of the child focusing on the progress made and challenges met in protecting children from discrimination and overcoming inequalities. It had also hosted a panel discussion with Uruguay and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the rights of the child in the post-2015 development agenda. The European Union was committed to working towards a post-2015 framework that tackled issues of global concern that had not been sufficiently covered in the Millennium Development Goals and contained clear and measurable goals. The framework should address justice, equality, good governance, democracy and national and international accountability. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union enshrined the right to education for all children free of charge and the European Union had played an active role in implementing the Dakar Framework for Action. Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments. The European Commission Communication on early childhood education and care gave support to programmes to make high-quality early childhood education and care a reality.

29. Children with disabilities were among the most vulnerable members of society, facing barriers in access to education, recreational facilities, culture, sport, access to health and protection from violence. They were at greater risk of poverty, marginalization and exclusion. The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 promoted the inclusion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including children with disabilities, in all relevant policies. The EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child promoted the rights of the child in all its policies and actions, particularly in such areas as child-friendly justice and the protection of children in vulnerable situations. The European Union would reflect on how to respond to new societal phenomena presenting opportunities and threats to children, guided by the principle of the best interests of the child. The European Commission was in the process of preparing a communication on the development of an integrated approach to child protection systems.

30. The European Union welcomed the engagement of the United Nations in relation to children in armed conflict and actively supported the campaign: "Children, not soldiers". Its strategy on combating all forms of violence against children included tackling

female genital mutilation, child early and forced marriage, the promotion of birth registration and the prevention of girls' infanticide and it had developed a comprehensive toolkit on integrating child rights in development cooperation with UNICEF.

31. She expressed gratitude for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and called on all States to implement the recommendations contained in the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. Protecting child victims of trafficking and enhancing cooperation with third countries and international organizations was a priority and part of the European Union Strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings 2012-2016. European Union Member States were committed to the fight against child sexual abuse and were strengthening their legislation and structures to better protect child victims. Cyberbullying and grooming in the digital space were also issues of key concern.

32. The European Union strongly welcomed the United Nations resolution on the elimination of female genital mutilations and it would devote over 100 million euro to gender equality and child wellbeing over seven years through its global public goods and challenges programme.

33. It was of great concern that malnutrition was the biggest underlying cause of death in children under the age of five. The European Union urged all states and international organizations to achieve the global nutrition targets set out by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2012. The number of children living in poverty within the European Union had significantly increased in recent years and efforts were being stepped up to prevent child poverty and the transmission of disadvantage across the generations. A recommendation on investing in children focused on prevention and early intervention with a strategy based on: adequate resources for children and their families; access to affordable, quality services; and children's participation. It promoted a universal approach that benefited all children, while targeting the most vulnerable.

34. The European Union was committed to the target of the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in 2016 and it promoted ratification of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers. The European

Union would continue to pursue political dialogues in order to promote and protect the rights of the child as well as its good cooperation with the United Nations system, regional organizations and civil society.

35. **Mr. Sfregola** (Italy) said that his country had always been strongly committed to the rights of children and especially to the rights of the girl child. Italy had participated in the campaign to end female genital mutilation and supported the present negotiations on the drafting of a resolution on ending early and forced child marriages. In addition, the proposed resolution on the rights of the child would give Member States the opportunity to renew their commitment to that cause. Given the scope and complexity of the issue of the human rights of the child, a coordinated response was required on the part of the international community. The approach used in the campaign “Children, not soldiers” could be replicated in dealing with children with disabilities in order to enable them to integrate effectively and with dignity into the communities in which they lived.

36. Together, Member States must create a world where violence against children was not tolerated and where boys and girls were empowered to reach their full potential. Each child should be provided with the knowledge, skills and security needed to determine his or her own path in life.

37. **Ms. Hamilton** (United States of America) said that the United States of America, a party to two of the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, was dedicated to improving the lives and promoting the rights of children. Children’s rights would form an important part of the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

38. The two winners of the Nobel Peace Prize were making lasting changes to the world through their fearless and tireless work on girls’ education, child labour and human trafficking. The Government of the United States was expanding and improving services for children and families, expanding access to high-quality preschool education for children from low- and moderate-income families. The Affordable Care Act gave parents greater control over their children’s health care by providing affordable health care for all children and greater choices to meet their needs.

39. There had been many successes since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, although challenges remained: the girls captured

and auctioned as slaves by ISIL terrorists; the thousands of children in West Africa orphaned by Ebola; schoolgirls abducted in Nigeria because they were seeking an education; and the suffering of over five million children within Syria and a further 1.5 million existing as refugees outside the country.

40. Improving the lives of girls must remain a priority: being born a girl should not mean being resigned to a life without an education or a future or being subjected to forced marriage at the age of 12. Girls should be empowered to reach their full potential and to grow into women who could serve as active and equal citizens who made valuable contributions to the growth of their nations and communities. More must be done to leave children the world they deserved.

41. **Mr. Rakofsky** (Russian Federation) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had become a guiding document on children’s rights and the Russian Federation welcomed the forthcoming high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the twenty-fifth anniversary of its adoption. The Russian Federation was committed to its international obligations under the Convention and it had made the protection of the rights of the child a cornerstone of its social policy. Concern for the physical and moral health of the younger generation and the fulfilment of their intellectual and creative potential were reflected in national projects and a strategy that supported families with numerous children and children and adolescents with limited opportunities. The strategy rendered assistance to orphans and to families that had taken in orphans from State orphanages. A children’s ombudsman monitored the activities in State and public institutions and protected Russian children living outside the country.

42. Noting the global trend in the growth of violence against children and welcoming the efforts of the international community to counteract it, the Russian Federation expressed particular concern for the welfare of Russian children who had suffered violence at the hands of their adoptive foreign parents.

43. Children in Ukraine were suffering violations of their right to food, health, education and medical assistance: at least 36 children had perished and 82 had been injured in the conflict zone since September. He called on the authorities in Ukraine to engage in dialogue with their own people and to resolve issues by peaceful means.

44. **Mr. Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that despite the progress made at the international level in defending children's rights, children continued to suffer from preventable diseases, hunger, poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Millions of children were victims of organ trafficking, pornography, child prostitution, violence and sexual exploitation. Most of the estimated 2,000 child deaths each day were preventable, particularly since one third were caused by malnutrition. A more just and equal world would be required if child mortality was to be reduced and if primary school access was to be provided to 57 million children. He praised the international efforts of UNICEF in promoting an environment in which children were protected.

45. The Government of Cuba had made the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents a priority. Cuba had been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1991 but it had put in place policies in favour of children and adolescents since 1959. In Cuba, child hunger, illiteracy, ill health and discrimination were ills of the past, a situation that had been achieved through the provision of free and universal health care and education. More than 50 per cent of the budget was allocated by Parliament to health, education and social care. The child mortality rate had fallen sharply since 1959: all children in Cuba were vaccinated against 13 diseases and emphasis was placed on detecting congenital diseases. Schools were provided for all children with disabilities. Cuba had fully achieved Millennium Development Goals 3 and 4 and had achieved much progress for its people despite the consequences of the economic, financial and commercial embargo; the country needed some antiretroviral treatment for children, which it was unable to obtain. Cuba called for international cooperation and solidarity to enable girls and boys to enjoy their full human rights.

46. **Ms. Stener** (Norway) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had inspired changes in laws, institutions and policies that had improved the lives of many children around the world. She commended the work of all who had defended and promoted the rights of the child and thereby contributed to implementation of the Convention. She welcomed the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi, which, in the year of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention, sent a message of support and recognition to individuals who worked to

defend the rights of children. Malala's voice was an important example of article 12 of the Convention on the right to be heard.

47. Children represented an asset for society: they had ideas, expectations and the ability to influence decisions. Allowing children to participate in processes affecting their lives and well-being paved the way for better policies and sustainable solutions. Although the Convention had been part of Norwegian law for 23 years, violence still took place and realizing children's rights required further work. Norway was shortly to host a conference on good parenting and was very pleased that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children would attend.

48. Norway paid particular attention to juvenile justice. It was estimated that more than one million children were incarcerated worldwide and more information was needed on the scope of the problem. Norway recommended that a study should be conducted by the United Nations on children deprived of their liberty.

49. Children deserved opportunities to lead fulfilling lives and contribute to society and education was essential to achieve that end. Children with disabilities and indigenous and working children were disproportionately denied the right to education while the 15 million girls who married before the age of 18 every year were also denied the right to health, choice and, ultimately, life. Norway was strongly committed to the campaign to end child marriage and to ensuring that all children received quality education.

50. **Mr. Joshi** (India) said that, despite the gains achieved in child rights by the international community in the previous quarter of a century, millions of children continued to live in extreme poverty and remained affected by socioeconomic crises, armed conflicts and natural disasters.

51. India was home to some 472 million children, representing 20 per cent of the child population of the world, and it was committed to ensuring the development of each child and the protection of their rights. The Constitution of India promoted the rights of the child and child rights were considered a lead indicator when measuring national development. A national policy for children viewed them as individuals with rights and responsibilities appropriate to their age and level of maturity. The Constitution provided for

free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years and the Government placed emphasis on the expansion of secondary schools and accessibility for girls as well as skill development in order to improve employability. Health services were delivered to mothers and to children under the age of five, and the National Food Security Act 2013 provided meals to children free of charge. Each year in January, India marked “National Girl Child Day” in order to highlight the different problems faced by girls and to spread gender sensitization.

52. An integrated child protection scheme had been launched in 2009 in order to protect vulnerable children and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act had been passed in 2012. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 2013 prescribed stringent punishment in a bid to prevent human trafficking, including the sale of children, and integrated anti-human trafficking services had been set up in 225 districts.

53. India was committed to the eradication of child labour. It had established a free, emergency telephone “Childline” for children in need of care and protection. A tracking system had been developed for the tracing of missing children, their repatriation and rehabilitation. Further government funds and official development assistance would be required, as well as the political will to prioritize children’s rights in resource allocation.

54. The Millennium Development Goals had been a guiding force in the continuing improvement in many children’s lives and it should be ensured that the post-2015 development agenda continued to prioritize the poorest and most vulnerable and to promote and safeguard the lives of all children. India was committed to take affirmative measures to ensure that all children could live and grow with equity, dignity and freedom.

55. **Ms. Yaguchi** (Japan) said that it was a mission of the international community to support children in moving towards a bright future and a life without fear or violence. However, many children still faced appalling conditions of poverty, disease, conflict, sexual exploitation and other threats. Japan was working tirelessly to protect and promote the rights of children. The education of children was crucial for the economic and social development of society and for the right of each child to live with respect and dignity. Many children, especially girls, were not permitted or

were unable to attend school and Japan supported a number of projects in numerous countries aimed at improving unbearable living conditions. Japan had contributed to the healthcare and psychosocial support of victims of abductions by Boko Haram in Nigeria, where 223 of the 276 girls abducted in April were still missing.

56. Child soldiers were deprived of their right to education and of their right to have a childhood. Their reintegration into society was achieved with difficulty. Therefore, he welcomed the “Children, not Soldiers” campaign and the initiatives taken to eliminate the recruitment of children by government armed forces in conflict by 2016. Japan had provided support for the reintegration of child soldiers in society in Africa.

57. Ebola had had devastating consequences for children in affected regions, with at least 3,700 children orphaned since the outbreak of the disease. Japan had contributed financially to the fight against Ebola and it had sent experts as a part of a WHO mission.

58. Japan had ratified the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and it had introduced an act for implementation of the Convention in April of that year. Cases of child pornography were increasing in Japan. The Government was upgrading the effectiveness of its systems in order to block child pornography on the Internet and arrest the perpetrators. A revised law against child prostitution and pornography had made possession of child pornography a crime. Japan would continue to engage constructively towards the empowerment of children and the protection of their rights.

59. **Ms. Loew** (Switzerland) said that in adopting the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international community had recognized that children were people with rights that should be respected, just like adults. Switzerland called on the few Member States that had not already done so to ratify the Convention. The Convention had contributed to legislative reforms in many countries and to positive developments in behaviour towards children. Efforts should be pursued in order to ensure that children were informed of their rights, that they were heard in legal proceedings and that their best interests were respected. Fostering prevention, promoting education, changing social norms and deploying an appropriate legal framework giving children access to legal remedies were necessary steps to ending violence

against children. For that reason, Switzerland was preparing to ratify the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure.

60. Switzerland commended the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children for the emphasis she had placed on juvenile justice. A World Congress on Juvenile Justice would be hosted by Switzerland in January 2015, where it was hoped that participants would pledge to implement relevant international obligations and commitments. Switzerland supported the “Children, not soldiers” campaign to end the recruitment of children in armed conflict.

61. Switzerland also welcomed the work of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack on the Lucens Guidelines. It was important to enforce international law in order to end violations of the rights of children, including by non-State armed groups. Donors could play an important role by plugging funding gaps. In recent months, Switzerland had made a major effort to bolster its commitment to protect children recruited by armed forces and non-State armed groups.

62. It was time to use the momentum for implementing the Millennium Development Goals in order to define goals for the post-2015 agenda, such as eliminating all forms of violence against children, promoting schooling and eliminating such harmful cultural practices as genital mutilation and child marriage. One of the main concerns of international politics was to provide a safe, violence-free environment for future generations.

63. **Mr. Morales** (Peru) said that significant progress had been made in advancing the rights of children and adolescents in his country. In 2012, a national plan of action for children was approved; it would guide public policy and civil society in ensuring action for children and young people. The plan focused on reducing child malnutrition; improving access to education; and reducing violence against children and child insecurity. Within the Ministry of Women and Populations, special programmes had been set up for children and adolescents, including for those that had been abandoned. National programmes had been set up for street children and to provide healthy food in schools. A national strategy aimed to reduce child labour and to improve basic education and apprenticeships. A

Defender of child and adolescent rights provided a free service through private and public institutions.

64. Although some progress had been made, the work to achieve children’s rights would be large and complex and Peru called on the international community to unite its efforts to overcome the remaining problems and to create an environment in which the rights of children and adolescents would be protected.

65. **Mr. Chayapan Bamrungphong** (Thailand) said that Thailand sought to uphold the rights of children based on the Convention and its Protocols and it was one of the few countries to have ratified all three of the Optional Protocols. As a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF, Thailand enhanced cooperation in the delivery of humanitarian services to children and, at the regional level, it was an active participant in the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children.

66. International frameworks were reflected in Thailand’s National Economic and Social Development Plan, which placed the highest priority on children’s rights and child development. In Thailand children were protected in the criminal justice system, the Nationality Act had been amended to ensure that every child received birth registration and access was provided to quality education regardless of social standing or physical or mental disabilities.

67. All children in Thailand, including migrant children, were protected by the Child Protection Act of 2003 and migrant women and children were provided with shelter. The Government was also working to improve the conditions in detention facilities in order to accommodate an increasing number of irregular migrants in accordance with international humanitarian standards, in particular in relation to the rights of the child.

68. Thailand had engaged in global efforts to eradicate violence against children and advocated inclusion of that theme in the post-2015 development agenda. It had also played a role in developing international strategies and standards on the elimination of violence against children in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. Those standards would ensure that children were treated in a sensitive manner and that their specific needs, especially in vulnerable situations, were taken into consideration. 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 shortly be presented to the General Assembly for adoption, after which they would be disseminated by Member States. A draft Global Programme on that topic had been prepared with the assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNICEF.

69. Thailand was honoured to be part of the core group of countries organizing 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. It would be an occasion to make collective efforts in closing protection gaps in order to fully realize the rights of all children.

70. **Mr. Laassel** (Morocco) said that violence against children was one of the worst of human rights violations and combating it represented a great challenge for society as it involved protecting children from abuse, preserving their dignity and ensuring appropriate conditions for their development.

71. Morocco had identified the protection of the rights of the child as an irreversible strategic choice and it had undertaken measures to fulfil its national and international commitments. Morocco had a clear vision of how to protect the rights of the child; it had signed all related international instruments and it had begun the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure. In September 2014, the third and fourth periodic reports of Morocco on its implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been examined by the Committee on the Rights of the Child with its initial report on the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had noted the progress made by Morocco, particularly in terms of legislation; the political and institutional measures taken; the removal by Morocco of its reservation in relation to article 14 of paragraph 1 of the Convention; and the acknowledgement of the primacy of international conventions over national laws.

72. Morocco had taken a number of initiatives for the protection of the rights of the child. Maternal parentage was now recognized; the phrase “born out of wedlock” no longer appeared on identity documents; a national plan for the social integration of persons with disabilities had been adopted; measures to improve the living conditions of children and the “cities without

slums” initiative had been taken; and the amendment of the penal code relating to the marriage of a minor to her abductor aimed to provide better protection for women and minors.

73. Morocco had undertaken a series of reforms in order to combat all forms of violence against children through a national child action plan, which had been conceived within the framework of the United Nations Plan of Action entitled “A World Fit for Children”. A midterm evaluation of the plan had shown the gains made in health and education as well as implementation gaps. A new, integrated policy on the protection of children from violence had been launched in 2013. The Government had made equitable access to education and health services a priority. Furthermore, with a view to reducing disparities between rural and urban settings, an action plan had been developed with a view to reducing maternal, newborn and child deaths. Morocco sought constant improvement in child health indicators and neonatal and post-natal mortality had both decreased in the country in the period 2006-2011. The number of children in full-time education had risen from approximately 50 per cent in 1998 to more than 94 per cent in 2014 and educational grants supported compulsory school attendance from the age of 6 to 15 years. A programme to combat gender-based violence in schools included training of doctors and administrators of regional academies.

74. A new policy and laws on migration, asylum and combatting human trafficking had been introduced, with measures to ensure that migrant children were enrolled in public and private schools. Children had recourse to a national authority to which could investigate and hear complaints on violations of children’s rights. Morocco would continue its efforts in line with its national and international commitments to protect and promote the rights of the child.

75. **Mr. Patriota** (Brazil) said that the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child offered an opportunity to reflect on progress achieved and challenges remaining in protecting children and overcoming inequalities. The greatest legacy of the Rio+20 Conference had been to reassert the centrality of poverty eradication and the reduction of inequalities for the achievement of sustainable development. States recognized that raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion and promoting sustainable

management of resources must be part of the sustainable development goals.

76. Yet progress in reducing poverty had been uneven, with women and children constituting the majority of the affected groups, especially in the least-developed countries. For that reason, Brazil was a strong advocate for the inclusion of the rights of the child as an integral component of the post-2015 development agenda. Income inequality was not inevitable since several countries, including Brazil, had succeeded in containing or reducing it through policy interventions. In designing programmes, the Government recognized the need for the broadest possible coverage, with special attention to children. Conditional cash transfer programmes had proven to be critical in that process, allowing families in economically vulnerable situations to sustain family income while sending their children to school.

77. General Assembly resolution 64/142 on guidelines for the alternative care of children, adopted by consensus in February 2010, provided a coherent policy framework in support of children deprived of parental care and was instrumental in protecting them from violence. The number of children separated from their families as a result of conflict, migration or extreme poverty was on the rise. Without the protection of their families, children were exposed to higher risks of exploitation, abuse and other violations. Brazil therefore called on Member States to take stock of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Guidelines with a view to enhancing efforts in the care and protection of children within the post-2015 framework.

78. Brazil saluted the distinction awarded to Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi by the Nobel Peace Prize. The award honoured the many more Malalas who existed in all countries but had not received the recognition they deserved. It also highlighted the right of all children to education and the need to combat child labour. Brazil had adopted a declaration on child labour, reaffirming the overarching goal of the sustained eradication of all child labour.

79. In December 2014, Brazil would host the XXI Pan-American Child Congress with the purpose of promoting experience and knowledge sharing and making recommendations that would foster children's well-being in the Americas. Core issues to be considered at the Congress were violence against

children, juveniles in conflict with the law and the criminal liability system. A first step to overcoming violence against children would be to bring issues to light in all of their complexity. A recent report by UNICEF had highlighted that children exposed to violence were more vulnerable to unemployment and poverty and they were more likely to become violent themselves. The Government of Brazil and civil society representatives had adopted strategies involving indirect approaches in order to prevent violence against children, which had proved to be extremely efficient, such as restricting the sale of alcohol after 11 p.m.

80. The Brazilian Code on Children and Adolescents of 1990 had been amended in June 2014 in order to prohibit all corporal punishment of children. In an effort to curb exploitation of children, the Government had implemented a 24-hour national telephone hotline and a public awareness campaign to assist victims. Legislation had been strengthened aimed at guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents who had had trouble with the law, providing them with education, health, public security and social assistance. Although detention should be used as a measure of last resort in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children were increasingly deprived of their liberty around the world, despite evidence that detention was costly, ineffective and negatively impacted children's health and development. For that reason, Brazil supported the call for a global study on children deprived of liberty that would assess how international standards were being implemented and identify recommendations and best practices, including alternatives to detention that would be more beneficial for children and society.

81. Violence was a multidimensional phenomenon: it included bullying, which had been shown to have a range of negative effects on victims. Promoting positive social norms that welcomed diversity was a critical step in acknowledging and protecting the rights of children. Countries must promote a culture of tolerance and non-discrimination from an early age. Comprehensive sexuality education and teaching on gender equality would have effects throughout the life cycle.

82. The content of the post-2015 development agenda must be constructed so as to guide the elaboration of public policies at national and local levels. It should contain goals that could be translated into concrete action by decision makers all over the world. Children,

who were most vulnerable to the effects of poverty and inequality, must not be left behind.

83. **Ms. Guzmán Mader** (Dominican Republic) said that ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been a significant step for her country; it was pleased to have recently ratified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict while the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure had entered into force in April of that year. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child would provide an opportunity to reflect on the shortcomings and challenges in the fight to promote and protect the rights of girls and boys.

84. The Dominican Republic had launched a programme of solidarity in order to combat poverty, supporting incomes and investing in human capital. Another plan focused on helping children under the age of five. A national literacy plan aimed to improve primary and secondary school education while recent educational reforms reinforced the commitment to quality education. The Government provided social protection for children in the areas of health, education, food and disability. The country also had a Code that protected the fundamental rights of children and adolescents in accordance with the Convention. It had developed a road map to fight violence against children which had been agreed at a subregional meeting of Central American nations in follow-up to the recommendations of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children. In October 2014, the Latin American and Caribbean region had launched a child-labour-free initiative.

85. The Dominican Republic committed itself to the creation of a world fit for children: in prioritizing the rights of the child, their survival, protection and development, Member States would be protecting the interests of all humanity.

86. **Ms. Yu** (Singapore) said that, as a small country, Singapore had always recognized that people were its greatest asset and resource. Investing in and nurturing children to their fullest potential so that they might achieve success in life was both an issue of child rights and an imperative for the continued survival of the country. Singapore's efforts at safeguarding the welfare of its children were underpinned by extensive legislation. The Children and Young Persons Act protected children from abuse, neglect and exploitation

and provided for the rehabilitation of those who had fallen afoul of the law. A child protection service and family service centres provided holistic support to children in distress or from disadvantaged families.

87. Unfortunately, bullying was a serious issue in Singapore: a recent study had found that 83 per cent of children had been bullied. To address those issues, Singapore had passed a Protection from Harassment Act in 2014 which strengthened the law on existing offences of harassment, threats or provocations of violence, both on and offline. A cyber wellness curriculum had been introduced for primary and secondary schools.

88. Singapore had one of the lowest infant and under-five mortality rates in the world and it was free of most vaccine-preventable diseases. Comprehensive health and dental services in schools included health screenings, nutrition counselling and health education and promotion. Mental health services were available to all children through dedicated school counsellors. Guidance specialists and educational psychologists also rendered support.

89. Singapore provided accessible, affordable and quality education. In the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Singapore students ranked among the top three in reading, science and mathematics and joint first on creative problem solving. Participation in secondary education was close to universal and more than 95 per cent of students progressed to post-secondary education in vocational and academic fields. In order to ensure that those pathways remained accessible and affordable to all, the Government and schools provided assistance to children from lower income families. Children with mild disabilities were supported in mainstream schools and additional resources were provided for special education schools. Higher subsidies had been allocated to early intervention programmes for children with special needs.

90. The Government had taken significant steps to improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of early childhood services in Singapore. The Early Childhood Development Agency had increased the number of places available in new childcare centres and there had been a five-fold increase in those receiving means-tested childcare subsidies. Even before ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the

Child, Singapore had sought to improve the life of every child.

91. **Ms. Nescher** (Lichtenstein) said that the protection and promotion of human rights and the rights of the child had always been at the forefront of Liechtenstein's engagement at the United Nations. She welcomed the ratification by South Sudan of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and urged for its universal ratification. Liechtenstein had ratified the first two Optional Protocols to the Convention and had committed to ratifying the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.

92. Liechtenstein supported the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and welcomed the Secretary-General's annual report (A/68/878), which illustrated the continued need to end impunity for the most serious violations of the rights of children. The plight of children had deteriorated in Gaza, Syria, Iraq and Nigeria. She particularly condemned the violence of Boko Haram and supported the inclusion of that organization in the Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions List. The Security Council should make full use of the tools available to it, including expanding, where relevant, the mandates of existing sanctions committees and allowing the Working Group to apply targeted measures against individuals who violated the rights of children. The Council should enhance its cooperation with international tribunals and consider referring situations to the International Criminal Court in a manner consistent with the Rome Statute. Efforts to resolve conflicts must take greater account of children's needs and peace negotiations must include the perspective of children at the earliest possible stage.

93. Protecting children from violence was a moral and legal imperative and it would be a priority in the post-2015 development agenda. One of the important lessons of the Millennium Development Goal process was that, despite important progress made, countries affected by violence tended to lag behind, with higher levels of poverty, malnourishment and child mortality. Therefore, she supported the proposal for a sustainable development goal that called for an end to abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children. Furthermore, she appreciated the attention that children and violence against children were being given as a cross-cutting dimension of other goals, including gender equality and empowerment, decent work and education.

94. Children were the future drivers of development and they should be placed at the very centre of the post-2015 development agenda. She agreed that it would be indispensable to promote sound monitoring tools and indicators to accelerate and monitor progress. In the year of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international community had a golden opportunity to place children's well-being and development at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda.

95. **Ms. Su Lay Nyo** (Myanmar) said that since the civilian government came into office in 2011, Myanmar had embarked on a path of democratic transition and political, economic and social reform. The Government had paid special attention to the protection and promotion of the rights of vulnerable groups, including children. Key legislative reforms included a revision of the Child Law to bring it into line with international norms and standards. Budget allocations to the social sector had increased, particularly in respect of education and health sectors benefiting mothers and children. Child protection was part of the culture and tradition of Myanmar. Myanmar had submitted its third and fourth periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2012 and various ministries had been assigned to implement the recommendations made by the Committee.

96. Poverty was one of the main factors blocking children's access to education and lack of education returned children to a life of poverty. In order to break that cycle, the Government had introduced free and compulsory education for all primary school children since 2011. It had recently signed an agreement with the World Bank and the Government of Australia in order to provide quality education to students from poor, rural areas in Myanmar.

97. Having acceded to ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 2013, Myanmar would implement the Convention faithfully in order to prevent children from being exploited. Her country shared the concern of the international community over the suffering of a growing number of children affected by armed conflicts and welcomed the campaign "Children, not soldiers".

98. Since 2004, a total of 597 under-age recruits had been discharged from the national army. A public awareness campaign against the use of under-age recruits had been launched and legal action was taken

against offenders. Demobilized children were provided with necessary documents, health care and vocational training to assist their reintegration.

99. She urged the international community to enhance their support for developing countries in their effort to save children through poverty reduction and the provision of education and health care for all.

100. **Mr. Phansourivong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child would be an important opportunity to further enhance international cooperation in the promotion and protection of children's rights.

101. The Lao People's Democratic Republic could be considered a young country, with children making up 50 per cent of the population. The Government had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and it had been translated into legislative, administrative and judicial measures such as the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children and the Law on Juvenile Justice. The Conventions and the Optional Protocols had been widely disseminated to the armed forces, the police, civil servants, judicial officers, students and the public. The Government was implementing policies, programmes and strategies in order to promote and protect children's rights such as the National Plan of Action for Children, the National Programme on Anti-Human Trafficking and the National Nutrition Strategy. Further efforts had been made to protect children with the signing of a regional memorandum of understanding against human trafficking.

102. The promotion and protection of the rights of children was a cross-cutting issue and his Government had paid great attention to institutional strengthening to ensure collaboration between departments. The National Commission for Mother and Child was responsible for monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Convention. The country had actively participated in regional cooperation frameworks, in particular with regard to the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children. The Lao Government was committed to building on past achievements in order to further promote and protect the rights of children through strengthening of the child education advocacy campaign and strengthened juvenile justice and child and family welfare systems.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.