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Chair: Mr. Hilale (Morocco)
later: Mr. Dempsey (Vice-Chair) (Canada)
later: Mr. Hilale (Chair) (Morocco)

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

Agenda item 68: Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/70/162, A/70/222, A/70/267, A/70/289 and A/70/315)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/70/265)

1. **Ms. Zerrougui** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report (A/70/162), said that the plight of children in conflict situations had worsened during and following the reporting period. The Central African Republic had relapsed into violence, many children had been killed and injured in Kunduz, Afghanistan, and the ongoing conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq and rising tensions and violence in the State of Palestine and Israel showed no signs of abating. Boko Haram continued to conduct suicide attacks, often using young girls, in Nigeria and neighbouring countries. Intensified aerial bombardments and ground combat in Yemen had resulted in an appalling number of child casualties; and in South Sudan there were ongoing violations of the recently signed peace agreement. An increasing number of refugees and displaced persons, almost half of whom were children, were fleeing conflict and violence.

2. Although States faced significant challenges in addressing threats by groups that perpetrated extreme violence, including atrocities against children, responses that failed to comply with international law risked aiding those very groups. Long-term solutions could be achieved only through the adoption of holistic approaches that took into account legitimate grievances, political alienation and the human rights of populations concerned. Education was a key factor in countering extremist discourse and reducing the risk of radicalization, but the right of millions of children to a quality education had been compromised by conflict. In Yemen, at least 161 schools had been destroyed and 409 damaged in less than six months in 2015, and thousands of schools remained closed due to security concerns, thereby denying education to 1.8 million children. In the Syrian Arab Republic, thousands of schools had been destroyed and damaged since 2011 and more than 60 per cent of Syrian refugee children had no access to education. The General Assembly

must continue to stress the importance of safeguarding education, and Member States must prioritize financial support for education in emergencies.

3. Over the reporting period there had also been a substantial increase in the number and scale of abductions of children, which were linked to other grave violations, including recruitment and sexual violence. In that regard, she welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 2225 (2015) on children and armed conflict. The arrest and detention of children in conflict situations on security charges and without due process was another issue affecting thousands of children, and children allegedly associated with armed groups were increasingly being treated as security threats, rather than as victims of grave violations. There was a need to strengthen the legal framework to protect children in such situations. Violators of children's rights must be held accountable with a view to preventing further violations and providing redress to victims.

4. Significant progress had been achieved, however, including in connection with the ongoing "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. While some of the campaign countries had seen an escalation in conflict and increased security challenges, and it was unlikely that all Government forces would be delisted by the end of 2016, a number of those countries had demonstrated clear commitments and had achieved commendable progress. Member States should support campaign countries' efforts to finalize the implementation of their action plans.

5. She had conducted a number of field visits that had enabled her to engage in dialogue with Governments, including in campaign countries. Those visits had facilitated the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism in Nigeria, advanced the implementation of an action plan in Myanmar, and promoted the release of children and the ratification of child protection instruments in Somalia. She welcomed that country's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the signing by Myanmar and ratification by Bahamas and Kiribati of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Intensive efforts had resulted in the release of thousands of former child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar and South Sudan and she had seized the opportunity of peace negotiations to advocate for strengthened protection of children,

including in the Central African Republic, Colombia and Myanmar. She hoped that the release of child soldiers in Colombia would be a next step in reaching a lasting peace. Her Office was in contact with non-State armed groups in Myanmar and Sudan and she welcomed the statement issued by the Justice and Equality Movement in Sudan reiterating its commitment to prohibit the recruitment and use of children in its ranks. When discussions with parties to a conflict were successful, resources must be mobilized quickly to support the release and reintegration of former child soldiers, with special attention paid to the needs of girls. She therefore urged Member States to provide technical and financial support to reintegration programmes, which were inextricably linked with long-term peace and security.

6. **Ms. Bardaoui** (Tunisia) said that her delegation was gravely concerned by increasingly frequent acts of violence against children and their indoctrination and recruitment, including as suicide bombers. Tunisia strongly condemned the fact that younger and younger girls were being subjected to sexual slavery and forced marriages, and the fact that large numbers of children were being deprived of their liberty in conflict areas. The situation of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, was a matter of particular concern. She asked the Special Representative for more information regarding her efforts to protect schools and hospitals and to end attacks on education and health-care facilities. She also asked for more information on the Special Representative's discussions with the African Union concerning the fate of children in armed conflict, particularly with regard to mediation.

7. **Ms. Pringle** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation reiterated its full support for the Special Representative's mandate and welcomed, in particular, the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. She asked what mechanisms could be used against the most persistent violators of children's rights, particularly those responsible for abductions of children, the frequency of which had increased sharply, and what could be done to raise awareness of that issue.

8. **Ms. Mansouri** (Algeria) said that her delegation fully supported the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign and welcomed the progress that had been made towards its implementation. She noted the positive contribution made by the Special Representative in advocating for the rights of children in the context of

peace negotiations and asked what her future plans were in that regard, what action Member States could take to support those efforts, and what key challenges were impeding efforts to address the needs of children affected by armed conflict, including with regard to their reintegration and long-term investment in their communities and societies. She also asked the Special Representative to brief the Committee on ways in which she was collaborating with regional organizations, particularly the African Union and the League of Arab States, in pursuit of her mandate.

9. **Mr. Ruiz Blanco** (Colombia) said that significant progress was being achieved in the peace negotiations between his Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army (FARC). His Government welcomed the announcement by FARC that it would refrain from recruiting children under 15 years of age and hoped that the peace process would lead to the release of children at the earliest possible date by that group. Colombia, which was one of the countries spearheading the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign, emphasized that all children recruited by non-State armed groups must be treated as victims rather than perpetrators of crimes. Under a specialized reintegration programme, liberated child recruits received compensation and social support services, and every effort was made to ensure that their rights were fully respected. Although Colombia did recruit children under 18 years of age into its armed forces and the police, those children could be recruited only with the consent of their parents or guardians and they did not take part in combat operations. Colombia had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other humanitarian instruments and was determined to do all it could to protect the rights of children in conflict situations.

10. **Ms. Strachwitz** (Liechtenstein), noting that 32 of the 49 non-State armed groups listed in the annexes to the most recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict ([A/69/926-S/2015/409](#)) were present in the seven remaining countries targeted in the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign, said that engagement with those groups was of crucial importance. Her delegation emphasized, however, that every effort must be made to avoid any politicization in that process. She asked for more information on the Special Representative's efforts in that regard and how those efforts could be supported by Member States.

11. **Ms. Juodkaitė Putrimienė** (Lithuania) said that her country welcomed the progress achieved in the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign. Lithuania was concerned, however, that escalating conflicts in a number of countries, including the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Yemen, were undermining that progress, and urged Governments to uphold the commitments they had made in that regard and end the recruitment and use of children by their armed forces. Lithuania was also concerned that children continued to suffer as a result of actions by non-State armed groups and welcomed the Special Representative’s efforts to engage with non-State actors. The Special Representative’s briefing at the joint meeting of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) and the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict had been particularly useful and it was to be hoped that she would be able to give briefings to other sanctions committees in the future. She asked what tools and mechanisms could facilitate the Special Representative’s efforts to address the challenges faced by children associated with extremist groups, and how child protection issues could be mainstreamed in counter-terrorism initiatives.

12. **Ms. Enesen** (Norway) said that her delegation was gravely concerned that schools were being attacked more frequently in armed conflicts, depriving children of their right to education. All parties to conflicts must take measures to protect schools, including by refraining from using them for military purposes, which could increase the vulnerability of schools to attack. She asked the Special Representative what steps could be taken by her Office or by other stakeholders to more strongly encourage States to adopt the Safe Schools Declaration. The Special Representative should use all opportunities, including peace negotiations, to engage with non-State actors with a view to addressing children and armed conflict issues, which could serve as an entry point for peace negotiations. Norway also called on Member States to allow access for United Nations child protection missions to non-State actors in their territories for the purpose of negotiating the release of children and addressing children and armed conflict issues. In that regard, she asked the Special Representative to elaborate on how those issues could be made an integral part of peace negotiations.

13. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union) underlined the European Union’s full support for the

“Children, Not Soldiers” campaign and encouraged the Special Representative to continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders, including non-State armed actors, in countries in which children were affected by armed conflict. The European Union commended the positive steps taken by certain non-State armed groups to uphold the rights of children but was gravely concerned about allegations of abuse and sexual exploitation by foreign troops and peacekeepers, including members of United Nations peacekeeping missions. All such allegations must be reported and investigated promptly and all perpetrators punished. He asked what further steps could be taken by the United Nations and its Member States to prevent and respond effectively to cases of abuse and sexual exploitation.

14. **Ms. Kirianoff Crimmins** (Switzerland) said that her country strongly supported the renewal of the Special Representative’s mandate, under adequate conditions and with appropriate resources. Switzerland reiterated its support for the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign and encouraged the Office of the Special Representative to continue to engage in regular dialogue with all parties committing violations against children, including non-State armed actors involved in the recruitment or use of children. It called on all parties to conflicts to take the necessary measures to protect schools. In that regard, the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict offered a solid basis for preventing their use by national security forces and armed groups. She asked the Special Representative in which regions she had faced the greatest challenges during the reporting period, how the adoption of the Guidelines could facilitate the implementation of her mandate, and what steps had been taken to follow up on the implementation of action plans signed by armed groups.

15. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia), noting that many children were forced to leave school as a result of conflict and denied their right to quality education, asked the Special Representative how Member States could raise awareness of the importance of children continuing their education in conflict situations. Recalling that Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals called for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all, she asked what steps could be taken to further the achievement of that Goal, and how access to quality education could be more effectively linked to Goal 16 on peace, justice and effective institutions.

16. **Ms. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her delegation attached the utmost importance to raising awareness of the need to protect the rights of children. Palestinian children were being affected every day by Israel's illegal occupation; they were being subjected to violence and physical harm by Israeli occupation forces and settler militias, and were enduring violations of their rights to education, health, freedom of movement and, on too many occasions, to life. Israel had recently relaxed its open fire policy and the occupation forces' more frequent use of live ammunition was causing the injury and death of increasing numbers of Palestinian children. Israeli settler terrorism was also on the rise and settlers had recently set a Palestinian family's house ablaze, burning to death an 18 month old baby and his parents and critically injuring his 4 year old brother. She asked what action the international community could and should take to strengthen protections for children in conflict situations, particularly in the Middle East, and what measures had proven successful in promoting the rights of such children. Her delegation reiterated its insistence that the Israeli Government, its occupying forces and Israeli settler militias should be listed in the annual reports of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict for grave violations against children.

17. **Mr. Ali Adoum** (Chad) said that his delegation welcomed the commitments by Somalia and other countries to uphold the rights of children, the release of children in Myanmar and South Sudan, and the progress achieved under the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. In that regard, campaign countries should facilitate access by United Nations agencies to armed groups in their territories with a view to securing the release and reintegration into society of children held by those groups. Chad emphasized the importance of facilitating children's access to quality education and was concerned that schools and other educational establishments continued to be targeted or suffer collateral damage as a result of actions by parties to armed conflicts. All such parties must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. Chad was also concerned that increasingly frequent acts of extreme violence were being perpetrated against children in Africa and the Middle East, and stressed that there was a growing risk of radicalization among children as a result of actions by armed groups. All stakeholders must respect international law in their fight against terrorism, and must treat children involved in conflicts as victims rather than perpetrators

of offences. In 2010, Chad had signed an agreement that facilitated access by United Nations agencies with a view to reintegrating children into their communities. In that regard, he asked what could be done to counter the indoctrination of children by armed groups following their release.

18. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that her delegation applauded the results of the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign, which were a testament to the global consensus to end child recruitment by armed forces. She was pleased to note that of the eight countries that still recruited and used children in armed forces, seven had already signed or recommitted to action plans. Adequate resources must be made available for community programmes providing psychological and social assistance, education and vocational opportunities for children separated from armed groups. Supporting those children and their communities was the best way to establish sustainable peace and stability. The challenges of 2014 demonstrated that, despite having measures in place, progress could be lost under the pressure of conflict. She asked how Member States could assist the Special Representative in effectively accomplishing her mission.

19. **Ms. Konzell-Stoffl** (Austria) said that her Government was concerned about the reported increase in violence, with children being targeted directly and disproportionately. She was pleased to see increased engagement with non-State actors, which had led to commitments and actions to end violence. She asked the Special Representative to elaborate on the good practices and lessons learned in her recent experiences with non-State actors. Austria highly valued the partnership between the Office of the Special Representative and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and supported integrating child protection expertise in peacekeeping missions through the training of child protection advisers. She asked the Special Representative for her assessment of the work carried out by the child protection advisers in the field and the tools they had at their disposal.

20. **Mr. de la Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that his delegation offered its support to the victims of the human rights violations that had occurred in various regions in 2014 and was concerned about the negative consequences that those conflicts had on children. Child recruitment by armed groups must not be tolerated under any circumstances; it was troubling that

many children were still being recruited and used in armed conflicts. He asked the Special Representative to elaborate on the standard operating procedure for the handover of children to child protection personnel, in particular with regard to the content of specific provisions regulating detention. Mexico also reaffirmed its support for the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign.

21. **Mr. Rosoi** (Malaysia) expressed his Government’s appreciation for the tireless efforts of the Special Representative and her team in advocating for the end of child recruitment by armed forces through the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign. He asked the Special Representative to share her views on incorporating child protection in peacekeeping operations, as suggested by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations convened by the Secretary-General, and asked what kind of impact might be expected from the consolidation.

22. **Ms. Butts** (United States of America) said that the dire situations in the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, South Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo had further deteriorated. Those responsible for violations and abuses committed against children, including non-State actors, must be held accountable. It was encouraging that seven of the eight Governments listed in the annexes to the annual reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict had signed or recommitted to action plans, which represented an important first step in protecting children in situations of armed conflict, and urged those Governments to implement the plans. Education was the most important tool in addressing the worldwide challenge of increased recruitment and radicalization by violent extremists. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization would continue to be the primary entity to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among States through education, with a view to preventing violent extremism. She asked the Special Representative to discuss the role of United Nations field offices in assisting States with capacity-building for community security.

23. **Mr. Glossner** (Germany) said that, in 2014 and 2015, there had been a high level of violence against children, who had often been targeted directly. The international community could not be silent in the face of those horrific acts. He thanked the Special

Representative for keeping the issue on the agenda and preventing it from becoming routine, and asked her to explain how the achievements of the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign would impact the recruitment of children by non-State armed groups. In regard to the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, Germany was concerned that the consolidation of specialized protection functions within the human rights components of peacekeeping missions might negatively impact their work. He asked whether the Special Representative could assess the proposal from the point of view of her Office.

24. **Mr. Al-Kumaim** (Yemen) said that the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign was particularly relevant for children in his country, whose situation could only be described as catastrophic. More than 7.3 million Yemeni children required urgent humanitarian assistance, there were more than 600,000 internally displaced children, and dozens of children had been killed in the ongoing violence. To resolve the crisis in Yemen, more effective collaboration was needed between the Security Council, specialized agencies and other international bodies, including the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Steps must also be taken to safeguard children’s access to education, which was a key factor impeding the recruitment of children by armed groups. It was a matter of grave concern that some 2 million Yemeni children had stopped attending school in 2015. He asked the Special Representative what she intended to do in 2016 to address the plight of children in his country.

25. **Ms. Fernandes** (Venezuela) said that children who grew up surrounded by armed conflict were less likely to build a future for their country based on peace and sustainable development; the issue therefore needed to be a top priority for Member States and the United Nations. Long-term investment and support must be given to measures that provided physical and psychological rehabilitation, education and reintegration into society for children in armed conflict; those programmes could be jeopardized by underfunding or a lack of political will. She asked the Special Representative for her opinion on the relationship between the reintegration into society of children in armed conflict and the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. **Mr. Barkan** (Israel) said that care should be taken not to incite children and adults to commit acts

of terror against other children and adults. Rather than showing compassion for the victims of terror, the Palestinians had chosen to attack Israel. The Palestinian Authority, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad were inciting the Palestinian people to murder men, women and children, which had led to the murder of Israeli children by Palestinian children. The Palestinians must stop that incitement. Israel would do whatever it could to prevent violence against children, Palestinian and Jewish alike. He called upon the Special Representative and the United Nations to strenuously demand that the Palestinians stop the incitement and calm the area.

27. **Mr. Tin** (Myanmar) thanked the Special Representative for her visit to Myanmar, which had provided great impetus for the shared goal of achieving zero underage recruitment in his country. His Government had signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations in 2012 and had fully cooperated with the country team. However, the country team needed support and guidance from the Special Representative to ensure that the facts and figures in her report accurately reflected the situation on the ground and that the data originated from the team. Myanmar would continue to cooperate with the Office of the Special Representative and the country team to achieve zero underage recruitment.

28. **Mr. Bouah-Kamon** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that his Government had been successful in ending child recruitment. The year 2015 marked the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which had established a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. At that time, Côte d'Ivoire had been facing a crisis and had been added to the list of parties that recruited and used children in situations of armed conflict in the report of the Secretary-General ([A/69/926-S/2015/409](#)). The situation had led to disastrous consequences for the rights of children. As at 2011, Côte d'Ivoire was no longer in conflict and no longer listed as recruiting children. To satisfy the requirements of the resolution and other instruments, his Government had implemented several measures to protect children and the exercise of their fundamental rights. He pledged his Government's support to the Special Representative and her Office in accomplishing her tasks.

29. **Ms. Zerrougui** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict),

said that it was important to use any space and any entry point to highlight the issue of children in armed conflict and ensure that it was taken into consideration. The peace process served as the best entry point, because children were the ones who suffered the most in every conflict, whether by being displaced to camps or being deprived of education. Children represented the future of a nation and must be the focus in order to achieve sustainable peace. If denied access to education or job opportunities, they could become gang members or restart a rebellion, as had been the case in Central America. The issue of children and armed conflict must be on the agenda from the outset to ensure that funding was set aside and programmes were created, because once a conflict was over, other issues would take precedence and children would be forgotten. Beginning a peace process with an issue that all parties could agree on, such as children and armed conflict, could serve as an entry point to build trust between the parties, as was the case in the Central African Republic. Member States that were monitoring ceasefires and implementing peace processes could actively engage in separating children from armed groups.

30. Education was also under attack in situations of armed conflict. Schools were being targeted not only by armed groups, but also by parties to conflicts, particularly extremist groups, in order to manipulate future generations. Some schools were also being targeted to prevent girls from attending. Consequently, even in areas where schools were still standing, parents were afraid to send their children to school. In some cases, children were being denied the limited services available even before conflicts arose. Due to a lack of infrastructure, children were being displaced so that schools could serve as military barracks, particularly in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those children were not provided with an alternative location and the schools would not be returned to communities for many years. Attacking and occupying schools would take years to repair and those without access to schools would have a longer wait. Forty-nine Member States had adopted the Safe Schools Declaration. Member States needed to train their troops and ensure that they had the proper tools on the ground, and make provision for disciplinary measures and legislation to prevent the occupation of schools.

31. There was a zero tolerance policy concerning sexual violence perpetrated by peacekeepers, and the United Nations had the tools to implement it. In order for there to be accountability, Member States needed to take action through monitoring and reporting. A response could be made only after the victims had been identified. Individual perpetrators must be punished, and repeated violations must result in action against the command responsible. It was important to train peacekeepers and make it clear to them that they would be held personally responsible. Governments needed to respond properly and quickly in order to reduce the number of violations. The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations had suggested including a child protection section within the human rights components of peacekeeping operations. The child protection mandate required skilled people who knew how to handle the victims, the community and the perpetrators, and her Office would ensure that the expertise and the specific needs of child protection were present in any peacekeeping setting.

32. Regional organizations, such as the Arab League and the African Union, had an important role to play in the implementation of her mandate, as the majority of the countries on the Security Council's agenda were located in those regions. Every year the African Union held a session dedicated to children and armed conflict, and she was working with it to develop policies, training programmes and a standard operating procedure for the handover of children to child protection personnel. She stressed that children were victims and should never be detained. Her Office could help establish the tools and mechanisms to deal with children who were removed from armed conflict. She called for support for the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign and noted that States, in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar and Somalia, were making progress in that regard.

33. **Ms. Santos País** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children), introducing her report ([A/70/289](#)), said that the international community should build on the momentum sparked by the recognition of the right of children to live free from violence, abuse and exploitation as a distinct priority and a cross-cutting concern in the new Agenda for Sustainable Development, and unite in championing that noble cause. Children themselves had contributed to the shaping of the Agenda and remained strongly

committed to playing a crucial role in its implementation, not simply as beneficiaries but above all as agents of change.

34. Millions of children of all ages and in all regions continued to be exposed to appalling situations of violence — in their neighbourhoods, their schools, and also within the family. In her report, she paid special attention to the protection of children from armed and gang violence, which was a complex phenomenon that illustrated the pervasiveness and corrosive nature of violence and its cumulative impact on children's development and their fundamental rights. Armed and gang violence found fertile ground in communities with high levels of poverty, social exclusion, deprivation, weak rule of law and frail governance, and was often associated with organized crime, drug trafficking and illegal arms flows. Non-State actors used threats and terror to control communities. With explosive urban growth and the deterioration of urban areas, no-go zones where the State had little or no presence were increasing, resulting in widespread fear and a profound sense of insecurity and impunity. In such communities, schools became the target of attacks and a source of recruitment of new gang members, and health centres were often the scene of raids and kidnappings. Children were deeply affected by the loss of friends and family members, the lack of employment opportunities and the anxiety of having no safe haven. For many children, joining a gang could be perceived as the only remaining alternative for protection and survival, even if associated with higher risks of violence and uncertainty.

35. As well as leaving long-lasting scars on children's lives, armed violence weakened the very foundations of social progress, generating huge costs for society, slowing economic development and eroding human and social capital. It would be eliminated only when children's rights and the goals of the 2030 Agenda were translated into tangible national action. Progress had been made in that regard: 48 countries had enacted strong legislation prohibiting all forms of violence against children, while more than 90 countries had a national strategy to prevent and respond to violence against children, such as the Child and Family Welfare Policy in Ghana, the National Medium-Term Development Plan in Indonesia, an implementation action plan in Norway, the National Road Map on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Children and Adolescents in the

Dominican Republic and a safety package of measures and resources to stop violence against at-risk women and children in Australia. Around the world, child protection systems were being strengthened; children and their families were increasingly empowered to access counselling and legal advice to address incidents of violence; there was better data and research; and the values of non-violence and tolerance were being promoted.

36. Regional organizations were crucial partners in such efforts and, through political commitments, high-level consultations and strategic plans, they had placed violence against children at the heart of the regional policy agendas, thus helping to enhance the accountability of States and accelerate progress in national implementation efforts. For example, the Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations had finalized a draft action plan on the elimination of violence against children for the period 2016-2025 which hopefully would be adopted in November 2015; and the Council of Europe was finalizing its 2016-2019 strategy on the rights of the child, which maintained a sharp focus on the protection of children from violence, including online abuse.

37. In order to achieve Goal 16.2 of the Agenda for Sustainable Development, strong partnerships that helped to mobilize political support and significant resources were needed. Governments, civil society, community and religious leaders, corporations, international organizations and all other actors, including children themselves, were indispensable in that process.

38. In view of the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children in 2016, it was time to consolidate the gains made and lessons learned and redouble efforts to accelerate progress. Monitoring such progress was crucial, which required better data, support for national statistical capacities, and indicators to help measure the prevalence and severity of violence against all children below the age of 18, including disaggregated data on children's exposure to sexual, physical and emotional violence. In that regard, there were many good lessons upon which to build, such as the national household surveys conducted in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean using a rigorous methodology. The Government of Nigeria had recently released the results of its first national survey

on violence against children and, in September 2015, the President of Nigeria had launched the Year of Action to End Violence against Children.

39. If efforts were not sustained and scaled up, there was a danger of diluting the issue of violence against children in the face of many other competing priorities. She remained strongly committed to mobilizing firm and sustained support to pursue her very important agenda. Children wanted a future in which they could enjoy a safe, happy and healthy life, free from fear and all forms of violence. The implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development and the recommendations of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children could help build such a world.

40. **Ms. Martins Yassine** (Brazil) said that her country was working to advance the promotion and protection of children's rights, particularly in the context of armed violence in the community, and was pleased to see specific reference in the Special Representative's report to the recent legislative reforms enacted in Brazil, which were the result of an intense democratic and multi-stakeholder debate. The need for accurate data and information had been discussed at length during the twenty-first Pan American Child and Adolescent Congress of the Organization of American States held in Brazil. At a meeting in Brasilia, the Southern Common Market countries had decided to develop a regional policy for the prevention of violence against children.

41. Brazil saw information and communication technologies in general and the Internet in particular as a tool for promoting access to information and an environment where children and adolescents could freely express their opinions and needs. In that regard, she asked how children's and adolescents' right to privacy could be better promoted.

42. Her delegation believed that the fifth Cross-Regional Round Table on violence against children would have benefited from a more balanced representation, especially of developing countries.

43. **Ms. Cid Carreño** (Chile) said that legislative reforms seeking to change the relationship between the State and children and to ensure the full protection of their rights, especially their right to protection against all forms of violence, was currently before the Chilean parliament. She asked the Special Representative to

provide recommendations for implementing such legislation.

44. **Ms. Cedeño Rengifo** (Panama) said that her Government appreciated the valuable advice provided by the Special Representative during her visit to Panama in July 2015. The children's centre she had visited, which provided specialized physical and psychosocial care, would serve as a model for others. Her Government was now overhauling the prison system, and was working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to draft a comprehensive law to protect children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Child labour had been cut in half in 2012-2014 thanks to action programmes that focused on access to education and sport.

45. **Mr. de la Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that Mexico was committed to forging a global alliance to combat violence against children, which, through the exchange of good practices, would pursue coordinated action to improve the protection of children. He asked the Special Representative what actions she would recommend to enable such an alliance to achieve its objectives. Mexico agreed with the need to pursue multisectoral agendas in the field of child protection and asked the Special Representative to consider including practical recommendations for establishing such agendas in her reports in the future.

46. **Mr. Saito** (Japan) said that Japan, together with the Special Representative and Mexico, had sponsored a side event on protecting children from bullying, the findings of which would be very useful for future work on that issue. In Japan, the Act for the Promotion of Measures to Prevent Bullying stipulated that schools must strengthen their counselling capacities to support children who were being bullied and establish teams composed of teachers, staff members and experts in psychology and child welfare in order to implement effective measures to prevent bullying. He asked the Special Representative to provide advice to Governments with regard to promoting safety in schools, fostering peaceful, inclusive societies and achieving education-related targets.

47. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union) asked how children and child victims involved in legal proceedings could be furnished with the necessary information in an effective way in order to ensure they understood not only what was happening and the

consequences they could face, but also how to claim their rights effectively.

48. **Ms. Kirianoff Crimmins** (Switzerland) said that her Government welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and called for their full implementation by all States. In collaboration with the Terre des Hommes Foundation, her Government had organised the World Congress on Juvenile Justice, which had noted in its final declaration that one of the major challenges was the implementation of the many instruments for the elimination of violence against children. She asked the Special Representative what the international community could do to improve the implementation of standards and instruments for juvenile justice; and how she planned to promote the use of new technologies by children so as to increase access to their rights, while minimizing the dangers.

49. **Ms. Strachwitz** (Liechtenstein) asked whether there was a specific process underway to seize the historic opportunity of the new Agenda for Sustainable Development and mobilize enhanced support for the design and implementation of a comprehensive agenda for the prevention and elimination of violence. She also asked whether the design stage would be inclusive and whether civil society would be consulted.

50. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) asked what the Special Representative's priorities were for 2016, which would be a very symbolic year in terms of children's rights.

51. **Ms. Guzmán Madera** (Dominican Republic), recalling that the Dominican Republic had recently launched a road map for combating violence against children, and planned to involve children in that process, asked what role the Special Representative would expect collaboration to play in the effective implementation of that road map as a key element for achieving the various targets associated with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

52. **Mr. Mack** (United States of America) said that the United States appreciated the Special Representative's data-driven approach and encouraged countries to collaborate with her to promote data collection and research. All Governments must reduce the number of children exposed to violence, ensure that children and their advocates were empowered to access

mechanisms for protection and redress, and ensure that those mechanisms functioned well. Given that migration could aggravate violence against children, he asked the Special Representative to provide suggestions on how host countries could improve access to social services for child migrants.

53. **Mr. Mendonça e Moura** (Portugal) asked how collaboration with regional organizations could help to advance the implementation of goals relating to children in the new Agenda for Sustainable Development. He also asked for information about initiatives promoted by the Special Representative's office to encourage the universal ratification of treaties that protected children from violence; and what further action could be developed to build the capacity of children and youth to become agents of change.

54. **Mr. Amorós Nuñez** (Cuba) said that three centres offering high-quality care and rehabilitation services to child victims of sexual and other forms of violence had been set up in his country in line with the recommendations made in the Special Representative's report. At the international level, he asked how the Special Representative thought the demand side of the sexual exploitation of children could be addressed as part of prevention and protection efforts.

55. **Ms. Enesen** (Norway) asked the Special Representative to elaborate on the role of community leaders in preventing and responding to violence against children. She also asked how the implementation of the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice could help to promote gender-sensitive approaches to the prevention of violence in the criminal justice system.

56. **Ms. Marteles Gutiérrez del Alamo** (Spain) said that significant progress had been made in Spain in terms of reforming the legislation on child protection. The reforms promoted a multisectoral approach, clearly prohibited all forms of violence against children and established child protection as a cross-cutting priority. She requested recommendations for raising awareness of the new legislation and examples of successful dissemination practices.

57. **Ms. Zahir** (Maldives) said that Maldives had taken a number of key measures to end violence against children, including the enactment of the Sexual Harassment and Abuse Prevention Act and the Sexual

Offences Act, which had strengthened the legal framework to protect women, children and migrants from violence and sexual abuse, and the finalization of the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons for 2015-2019. It was now in the final stages of acceding to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. While the focus for 2015 was on children affected by armed violence, there was currently a refugee crisis, and it was therefore important to identify appropriate measures that Governments could take to provide adequate protection to children fleeing from conflict.

58. **Ms. Pérez Gómez** (Colombia) said that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be achieved through long-term public policy action. Special attention must be paid to the development of indicators that allowed adjustments to be made along the way and ensured that as many boys and girls were reached as possible. Her delegation would appreciate guidance on the implementation of the Agenda at the national and regional levels since local projects and initiatives were the most capable of closing the gaps that the Agenda addressed.

59. **Mr. Babjee** (Singapore) said that Singapore was constantly searching for new ways to improve policies related to bullying. It had collaborated with the private sector on cyber wellness programmes to provide resources to young people facing problems with bullying. Efforts with regard to cyber bullying had thus far focused on those being bullied; cyber bullies should also be addressed, but they were often anonymous and difficult to identify. He asked the Special Representative to advise on how countries could address cyber bullying.

60. **Ms. Santos País** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children) said that civil society organizations, religious leaders, community leaders, children, professional associations and statisticians would play a decisive role in helping to develop the right tools and methodologies for promoting and monitoring progress in implementing the new Agenda for Sustainable Development. When countries had very strong national agendas on violence against children, it was much easier to mobilize the public, families, teachers, law enforcement agencies, health professionals and all those who could help to prevent and address violence against children and fight

impunity. Her Office had been meeting with regional organizations, Member States, religious leaders and other partners to launch a movement in that direction.

61. She would continue to promote ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Regional organizations played an important role in that regard. At the Pacific Conference on Ending Violence against Children, held in Fiji in May 2015, delegations had discussed the difficulties in ratifying treaties, reporting to treaty bodies and implementing the conventions, as well as how to support those processes. She was confident that the ratification by Kiribati of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict was the start of a long movement in that direction in the Pacific region. In the Caribbean region, an important strategy had been developed with UNICEF, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and Governments in the region to advance that Protocol. The European Union and the Council of Europe had firmly supported ratification efforts. One of the commitments of the Pan American Child and Adolescent Congress had been the promotion of the ratification and implementation of treaties on the rights of the child. Nevertheless, a difference would only be made when children were aware of their rights and could use the treaties; her Office had thus focused on developing child-friendly materials that children could understand and use.

62. It was now essential to move beyond the celebration of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and enter the process of its implementation. The development of regional strategies, national development plans and road maps on violence against children showed that there was a sound foundation for moving forward. However, the question of indicators that captured all forms of violence and addressed all persons below the age of 18 was very important for measuring progress and Governments were participating actively in that regard.

63. In relation to safety in schools and the prevention of bullying, a whole-school approach involving teachers, students, families and local authorities was needed. For cyber and other bullying, children must be empowered to report bullying and seek help. Strong legislation to prohibit all forms of violence against children, as well as data and research, were also needed.

64. Without a clear message in law, it would be difficult to convince societies to support the implementation of legislation on violence against children, and social prejudices that condoned violence against children would not be overcome. Training professionals and informing families and children was part of that process. It was not enough to pass just one law on the subject; prohibition must permeate all areas of law.

65. It was essential to enable children to use new technologies safely. Governments, the private sector, civil society and children all had a role to play in that regard. Her office was working hard with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and many other actors to organize the next annual thematic day devoted to that topic.

66. Engagement at all levels was of fundamental importance and communities had a key role to play. In Malawi, for example, her Office had worked with tribal leaders to mobilize support for the adoption of an important piece of legislation that banned child marriage and established the minimum age of marriage at 18. Community leaders had taken it upon themselves to sensitize the local population to the implementation of the new legislation. Demonstrating how much could be achieved at the local level, one of the tribal leaders had annulled 330 child marriages, returned all the children to school and dismissed all the chiefs who had condoned child marriages.

67. *Mr. Dempsey (Canada), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

68. **Mr. Abdi** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children ([A/70/265](#)), the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ([A/70/315](#)) and the girl child ([A/70/267](#)), said that together the three reports painted a picture of progress, challenge and opportunity. Undeniable progress had been made in reducing child mortality, stunting, malaria deaths, new HIV infections and the number of primary school-age children not attending school. Millions of children, however, were still living in extreme poverty and being denied adequate nutrition, proper sanitation and vaccinations against disease. Girls and children with disabilities were disproportionately being denied their right to education, and the Ebola epidemic had affected

the communities of almost 10 million children. In addition 15 million children had had their lives upended in 2014 by violent conflicts in the Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and the State of Palestine. Those least responsible — children — were bearing the brunt of the effects of those crises and making long, perilous journeys in search of safety. Discrimination, marginalization and the impacts of climate change meant that many children had not shared in the success of the Millennium Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals now presented an opportunity to reach those children still being left behind; nearly all the Goals depended on reaching the world's most disadvantaged children.

69. The achievement of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals- to ensure quality education for all — would mean investing in access and quality. Enrolling more children into pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of schooling in low and lower-middle-income countries would require an estimated additional US\$39 billion a year. Innovative approaches and measures were needed, such as cash transfers, which had succeeded in keeping children in school in certain African countries. At the same time, poor quality was also holding back learning, even for those children who did attend school. The efficiency of investments in quality must be improved, targeting public resources to the most deprived communities and children, including girls and children living in fragile or conflict-affected States. Each additional year of schooling could add up to 18 per cent to a nation's GDP and translate into a 10 per cent increase in personal income. Investments in quality must moreover be made from the very start of a child's life, when the brain cell connections were occurring at the fastest rate, thereby enabling children to contribute to the economic growth, peace and stability of their societies in the future.

70. No group of children was as systematically denied education as girls. That denial was part of a vicious cycle deeply rooted in gender-based discrimination that led to horrific abuses of girls' rights, including female genital mutilation, early marriage, honour killings and sexual slavery. Girls who were deprived of an education were far more likely to suffer from poor health, poverty and early marriage. Over generations, the combined effects of poor health, lack of protection from abuse and the absence of

education and economic opportunities weighed down families, communities and entire nations. There was no better way to fight discrimination and break cultural biases than to educate girls and raise a generation of strong, independent and successful women, thereby helping to build economies, support families and promote sustainable development.

71. Unfortunately, there were a number of barriers to girls' education, including the lack of separate toilets, that kept girls out of school, and the lack of water facilities, which forced girls to carry heavy water containers for long distances, making them vulnerable to not only injury, but attack and abuse at faraway, isolated water access points. Inadequate sanitation services also hindered girls' ability to manage menstruation, robbing them of dignity and reinforcing negative stereotypes and prejudices about menstruation. Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals highlighted the importance of paying special attention to the water and sanitation needs of women and girls and investing in the required infrastructure and services.

72. *Mr. Hilale (Morocco) resumed the Chair.*

73. **Ms. Ntaba** (Zimbabwe), noting that the report of the Secretary-General on the girl child (A/70/267) highlighted the importance of addressing the lack of safe and adequate water, sanitation and hygiene services that impacted girls, said that her delegation looked forward to receiving more information, in particular on access to clean and safe sanitary facilities for girls in vulnerable situations, such as those from poor households and in rural areas. She enquired about the prevalence of child-headed households, which was not addressed in the report, and whether programmes had been put in place to address that phenomenon.

74. **Mr. Barkan** (Israel) said that, although there was still room for improvement, his Government had invested considerably in education centres and scholarships to increase the number of Arab Israeli children graduating from high school and entering higher education in order to promote their integration into Israeli life. The performance of Arab students on the Programme for International Student Assessment tests for reading and mathematics had improved, and, at some schools for Arab children, 100 per cent completed their high school education. The number of Arab citizens entering academia had risen to 15 per

cent, and most pharmacists in Israel were Arabs who had studied in Israel.

75. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) asked how the Incheon Declaration on realizing children's right to education within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted at the World Education Forum held in the Republic of Korea in May 2015, would take into account the contributions of all stakeholders. Increasing importance was rightly being given to the consideration of children's opinions and experiences in the drafting of national strategies. Education was a prerequisite for effective participation; it was also crucial that children's participation should be real and not merely symbolic.

76. **Mr. Abdi** (Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF) said that a number of government-run social protection programmes had been implemented for child-headed households in countries in southern Africa. He commended the work done by Israel to support the education of children from minority language groups, and agreed wholeheartedly with the representative of Cameroon that the participation of children in national processes must be real and effective.

77. **Ms. Strasser-King** (Sierra Leone), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the right to education must be recognized as the key to protecting children. Despite the challenges posed by conflicts in some African States, progress had been made in school attendance in the region. Unfortunately free primary education, where it existed, was of poor quality in many African countries.

78. The African common position on the post-2015 development agenda reaffirmed Africa's commitment to improving the quality of education and training at all levels for all ages. The African Group looked forward to working with all partners to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda. As signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, African countries were willing to take the necessary measures to ensure the protection, survival and development of every child in Africa.

79. The African Union heads of State and Government had declared the silencing of guns by 2020 in their determination not to bequeath the burdens of conflict to the next generations of Africans. In that connection they had committed themselves to establishing an annual consultative platform for policy

dialogue, involving all stakeholders, to discuss developments, constraints and measures geared towards achieving the Union's Agenda 2063.

80. While access to education for children in conflict-affected settings was of critical importance, pilot peacebuilding and educational programming focused on reaching children and youth both in and out of school, though systemic and individual-level interventions, needed to be strengthened. Lessons learnt from pilot countries should be replicated in other countries. Attacks on education and health-care facilities deprived millions of children of their rights to the health and education required to realize their potential. The Group appealed for improved advocacy and implementation of the Guidance Note on Security Council resolution 1998 (2011) entitled "Protect schools and hospitals: end attacks on education and health care", approved by the General Assembly in May 2014.

81. To promote and protect the rights of children, States must work together and adhere to the plan of action adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on children. In that regard, the African Group called for continued advocacy and support for the elimination of female genital mutilation and forced child marriage. Innovative approaches to break down barriers and stronger partnerships were required to accelerate the realization of the commitments made and to achieve a world fit for children.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.