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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 12th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 14 October 2015, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Hilale ..... (Morocco)  
*later:* Mr. Mohamed (Vice-Chair)..... (Guyana)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 29: Advancement of women** (*continued*)  
(A/70/38 and A/70/124)

**(a) Advancement of women** (*continued*) (A/70/204, A/70/205, A/70/209 and A/C.3/70/3)

**(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly** (*continued*) (A/70/180)

1. **Mr. Nkoloji** (Botswana) said that, according to United Nations reports, many countries were far from achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. His country believed that Sustainable Development Goal 5 should provide the necessary impetus for States to remove structural and other barriers to gender equality and to develop mechanisms for the advancement of women. Botswana continued to enact legislation and review policies with the aim of accelerating the implementation of internationally agreed goals and instruments to allow women and girls to realize their potential and protect their human rights and dignity. It had therefore adopted the National Policy on Gender and Development, which served as a springboard for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5. Other legislative measures had also been taken.

2. The Government was convinced of the link between education, poverty and development and had therefore expended efforts and national resources on education and strengthening capacities in vocational skills to enable Botswanans, particularly women, to find decent work and contribute to national development. Women constituted 80 per cent of beneficiaries of the national flagship programme for poverty eradication. The programme had allowed women to find income-generating opportunities that transformed the lives of those women and their families. Political will was crucial to closing the gender gap globally. It was imperative to build a society free of gender-based discrimination and violence.

3. **Ms. Adhikari** (Nepal) said that her country's efforts in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women had led to significant progress in achieving women's rights. The policy shift from welfare to a rights-based approach had been instrumental in reducing poverty, structural gaps and inequalities and in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Nepal had an institutional

framework to implement policies, strategies, action plans and programmes on women and girls.

4. The Constitution enacted in September 2015 guaranteed women at least 33 per cent of seats in parliament with equal gender representation in high-level positions. The Constitution provided that persons of the same gender or community could not hold the elected offices of President and Vice-President at the same time and also ensured the right to lineage, protection against all forms of exploitation, and equal rights in family matters and property, among other provisions. It had elevated the National Women's Commission to constitutional status in order to safeguard the rights and interests of women with independent mandates and mechanisms. The Constitution was very progressive with regard to inclusion, representation and women's empowerment.

5. The Government had been integrating major international human rights instruments into national legislation, in line with Nepal's commitments. Nepal had been implementing national plans of action on legislation including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Beijing Platform for Action. The national plans of action had established implementation mechanisms at all levels domestically, and Nepal had ratified several conventions on women and girls at the regional level and had been submitting periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

6. The current thirteenth periodic development plan contained several targeted programmes for women and girls. Nepal's gender-responsive budget, the first in the region, had reached 22 per cent of the total budget. There had been a sustained effort to review laws that discriminated on the basis of gender, age, class, caste and ethnicity. Nepal was the first South Asian country to develop a national plan of action based on Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). The plan aimed to increase the participation of women in decision-making, protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence and end impunity and included a high-level monitoring mechanism.

7. In order to address the security challenges of migrant women, there should be coordinated efforts at all levels to combat violence against female migrant workers and to protect their basic human rights. Nepal

therefore supported initiatives to define the roles and responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination to promote dialogue and establish cooperation between countries to address the problem. Lastly, the Government was focused on integrating its policies and programmes in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development alongside the reconstruction work following the earthquakes that had struck Nepal in April and May 2015, leaving women, among others, in a vulnerable situation.

8. **Mr. Nina** (Albania) said that the debate on the review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) should accelerate the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and address new challenges, such as the emergence of violent extremism. In implementing that resolution, the Albanian Government had focused its efforts on several key objectives relating to the need to enhance women's leadership, increase their participation in political and public decision-making and representation in the police and armed forces, and enhance relevant programmes for professional training on gender issues and violence against women.

9. The economic and social development of Albania could not be achieved without concrete results in promoting gender issues and incorporating them into national development policies. In collaboration with civil society and international organizations, the Government had worked intensively on harmonizing national legislation with international standards and on drafting and implementing the national strategy on gender equality and domestic violence. There had been increased representation of women in political and public decision-making, and women constituted 21 per cent of the current Albanian parliament. In the Government cabinet, 7 out of 19 ministers were female, alongside 9 out of 23 deputy ministers.

10. Increasing and improving women's access to credit, promoting and expanding employment programmes for women and girls, narrowing the gap in unemployment and increasing the participation of women in the labour market were objectives aimed at furthering the economic empowerment of women. Women and girls with disabilities were a priority group in that regard. His Government also sought to prevent and reduce violence against women and domestic violence; eliminate gender discrimination in education, health and the media; strengthen legal and institutional mechanisms; and improve mechanisms for monitoring

and evaluation. A further objective was to increase the participation of women in political bodies and decision-making, and the central and local representation of women in managerial and professional positions in all public administration bodies, including the representation of women in the police and armed forces.

11. Although his delegation had noted the suggestions for a legally binding instrument in the United Nations framework, it considered that the protection gaps which currently existed were not of a normative nature and that a new norm-setting process was not required. Albania had extended its work on gender equality and gender-based violence at several levels, ranging from improving policies and legislation in compliance with international conventions, increasing the representation of women at the policy level, strengthening enforcement capacities at the central and local levels, improving data collection and monitoring mechanisms, and expanding the scope of action and social services to all civil society actors.

12. Concrete steps had been taken to increase public awareness and were aimed at changing gender stereotypes through awareness campaigns, changing attitudes about gender issues by strengthening the capacity of public administration and responsible actors in the field of gender equality, and reducing gender-based violence and domestic violence. Increased political participation, economic empowerment and partnership with boys and men to change stereotypes and cultural norms would assist government efforts to advance the gender equality agenda. Lastly, Albania remained committed to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

13. **Mr. Ri Song Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that in his country women were achieving greater success than men in scientific research, education, culture and sports, which reflected the Government's policy attaching great importance to women and affording them preferential treatment. It was currently involved in enhancing the functions and role of its national committee on the implementation of international human rights instruments and was preparing to submit its next periodic national report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

14. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea wished to take issue once again with the attitude of Japan attempting to cover up its past crimes such as the use of "comfort women" by the Japanese Army. During its occupation of Korea, Japan had forced more than 200,000 Korean women, including teenagers, to serve as sex slaves, exposing them to great pain and suffering. Although many countries were demanding that Japan should apologize and make compensation for its crimes against humanity, Japan continued to deny what it had done. The statement made by the Japanese Prime Minister in August 2015 had failed to mention that sexual slavery and his country's crimes of aggression.

15. Japan had forced hundreds of thousands of women into sexual slavery and massacred tens of millions of Asian people, including women and children. It was, therefore, preposterous, for Japan to speak loudly about "world peace" and "human rights" in other countries. His delegation once again strongly urged Japan to make a sincere apology and provide due compensation for the crime of sexual slavery committed by its Imperial Army.

16. **Ms. Gudrunardottir** (Iceland) said that her country's Prime Minister had taken on a principal role as one of 10 Head of State Impact Champions for the HeForShe campaign, organized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. One in 20 Icelandic men had joined the HeForShe campaign, including all male ministers. Men worldwide should join that campaign and take action within their communities.

17. In line with its commitment to engage men and boys, Iceland had held a Barbershop Conference in January 2015 together with Suriname. The Conference had aimed to change the way in which men talked about gender equality and engaged themselves. Gender equality was not a women's issue, but a fundamental human right. Iceland believed that the Conference had made a valuable contribution in that regard and intended to organize similar conferences in the future.

18. Women in Iceland still received a measurably lower income than their male counterparts, and her country was committed to closing that gap by 2022 to ensure that men and women received equal pay for work of equal value. Iceland had launched a multi-stakeholder action plan that included the State, local authorities, social partners and the private sector to achieve that goal. Companies that demonstrated that

their employees were paid equally would receive official certification of that fact. Lastly, she noted with satisfaction that around 45 per cent of the members of the current session of the Icelandic parliament were women, the highest number yet.

19. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) said that her country's national strategy for gender equality and the empowerment of women prominently featured the promotion and protection of women's rights in education, health, the fight against violence against women, the improvement of their participation in politics, the strengthening of women's access to justice and the improvement of their social and legal status. Regarding education, Cameroon had targeted support such as scholarships for successful female candidates in official examinations, encouragement for girls to pursue scientific and technical education and the targeting of girls living in rural and disadvantaged areas.

20. The objectives of Cameroon's sectoral health strategy particularly focused on reducing maternal mortality, creating new health-care centres and implementing a strategy to pre-position childbirth kits. The fight against HIV/AIDS remained a high priority for the Government, especially regarding women and children.

21. Cameroon had developed a national strategy to combat violence against women, which had been extended to include its ten regions and communicated to senators and deputies. Civil society had also made an important contribution in that respect. Regarding gender equality, although the quota of 30 per cent had not yet been achieved, progress had been made towards integrating gender equality into the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes.

22. Important progress had been made in improving women's participation in political life. A national law stipulated that gender should be taken into account in all processes so as to improve women's participation. The advocacy and political education of women had also intensified. A political training manual for women had been developed and was being disseminated. Women were encouraged to register on electoral rolls and stand as candidates for different elected posts. Such actions had allowed the number of female deputies and women in the Government to increase.

23. Women in vulnerable situations, such as those in indigenous communities and rural women, had benefited

from a number of projects and were the focus of Government efforts regarding access to education, health and civil status documents. The Government had taken measures to increase the number of disabled female candidates for official examinations and had also addressed the issue of female migrants by creating an interministerial committee to coordinate humanitarian actions on the ground. Lastly, referring to the 2030 Agenda, she urged the international community to fully support the achievement of Goal 17, to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

24. **Mr. Dzonzi** (Malawi) said that his country was committed to creating a society where no one was left behind. As women and girls constituted 51 per cent of its population, equality and the empowerment of girls and women were priorities for the Government. Malawi had a gender policy that set out clear strategies on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Laws had been enacted on gender equality, the prevention of domestic violence, child care, justice, trafficking in persons, marriage, divorce, and family relations. Implementation of those laws and the facilitation of programmes under them promoted gender equality and the empowerment of women.

25. Malawi was running campaigns on various issues, including ending child marriage and keeping girls in school. Girls who became pregnant while in school were encouraged to return, and 600,000 girls had so far been readmitted to school after delivery. In order to increase the rate of retention and completion of secondary education by girls, the Government was constructing secondary boarding schools and hostels in schools that did not previously have them. The number of female students in tertiary institutions was growing and was currently at 42 per cent.

26. Regarding violence against women, the Government had set up over 300 community victim support units, 120 of which were in police stations, and 21 centres where counselling and health-care services were given to victims of gender-based violence and where cases of such violence were investigated. Various programmes enabled men to be at the forefront of the fight against gender-based violence.

27. Village savings and loan schemes had been established with over 2,000 groups, benefiting over 1.5 million people. Those groups were mainly comprised of women who did not have a reliable base

for economic empowerment, training in entrepreneurship or business skills. Over 74 per cent of the beneficiaries of those schemes were women.

28. **Ms. Pobee** (Ghana) said that her country was committed to partnerships at the national, regional and international levels. Providing women with education, health care, access to decent work and representation in political and economic decision-making processes would fuel sustainable economies for the broader benefit of societies and humanity.

29. Ghana had taken significant steps towards bridging the gender gap, particularly in education, where targeted measures had been implemented to increase enrolment rates for girls at all levels of the system. The Government had also launched a national campaign against child, early and forced marriages in order to abolish those practices and allow girls to remain in school. To address harmful social and cultural practices which perpetuated subjugation and violence against women, Ghana had introduced legislation, including a bill on the property rights of spouses and the proposed amendment of the Intestate Succession Law, which were currently before Parliament.

30. Furthermore, the Government had launched the National Gender Policy to place gender equality at the centre of the national development process and to ensure that women participated fully in decision-making and governance. There had been an unprecedented increase in the appointment of women to high profile positions, which showed the Government's resolve to meet its targets for equal gender representation. The National and Regional Houses of Chiefs had begun to integrate Queen Mothers into both Houses, strengthening the role of Queen Mothers in traditional governance.

31. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that the empowerment of women was at the heart of his country's development agenda. Bangladesh's national policy on women's development and national plan of action were guided by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and development interventions were focused on practical gender needs.

32. To encourage female education, the Government had made education free for girls up to grade 12 and planned to extend that to the graduate level. Stipends and free meals for female students from poorer families had helped to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary schools; girls constituted 53 per cent of

students at the secondary level. In 2015, 75 per cent of the recipients of stipends were girls. Six educational institutions for girls only had been established and, in addition to skills development, collateral-free small loans had been offered to female entrepreneurs to foster self-reliance. Currently, more than 95 per cent of garment makers were female, and the Government's targeted approach had led to an overall increase in the number of women in the workforce from 7 per cent in 2000 to over 36 per cent in 2015.

33. In the national Parliament, 50 seats out of 350 were reserved for women, and the Government had introduced a system of electing women Vice-Chairmen at various levels of local government. Bangladesh was the only country in the world that had women as Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Speaker, Leader of the House and Deputy Leader of the House. Nearly 14,000 women had been elected in local government elections.

34. Bangladesh had introduced special programmes for ensuring women's health. The introduction of six months leave, maternity and lactating allowances, and the establishment of free community clinics were among measures which had lowered maternal mortality by a third and infant mortality by 72 per cent. The Government had also introduced gender budgeting for women's advancement.

35. **Ms. Simunic** (Croatia) said that the discussions at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly in September 2015 had placed a greater emphasis than ever before on the advancement of the human rights of women and girls. Her Government was committed to advancing the aims of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the 2030 Agenda. The primary focus of the current session should be on developing a vision for the future, rather than reviewing past achievements. The notion that women's progress represented human progress was at the core of Croatian gender quality policy. Her Government had introduced a number of targeted measures to eliminate gender discrimination at every level of society and was developing a plan for the period 2016-2020 to address the remaining challenges.

36. The subordination of women was a common component of the tactics, messaging and violence of extremist and terrorist groups, who subjected women to sexual slavery, rape, trafficking and other grave human rights violations. Research had revealed a strong

correlation between levels of conflict and gender inequality, and there was growing recognition that peace and gender equality were interdependent. Consequently, her Government would continue to incorporate the women, peace and security agenda in all of its defence, diplomacy and development activities by making gender issues central to its work on conflict, stability and security; identifying and applying lessons learned from the experiences of women and girls in conflict situations; utilizing the assistance of international organizations and civil society to gain understanding of situations on the ground; and developing best practices for the protection, inclusion and empowerment of women and girls.

37. With regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, it would be important to consider how to translate political commitments into clear and consistent support for women's empowerment; ensure equal opportunities in the areas of leadership, peacebuilding and state-building; expand women's economic opportunities; recognize the burden of unpaid care work; resolve gender disparities in schools; end discrimination and gender-based violence; and eliminate child marriage and female genital mutilation.

38. To that end, coherent international and national sectoral policies should be developed to encourage women to take up leadership roles, increase the number of girls in secondary education and implement legislative and administrative reforms to ensure that women had equal rights to economic and productive resources. As the next chair of the Equal Futures Partnership to expand women's political and economic participation, her country would work to identify remaining obstacles and new challenges and examine means of strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment at the national and international levels.

39. **Mr. González de Linares Palou** (Spain) said that gender equality was a fundamental principle of human rights and, as such, should be the shared responsibility of all Member States and United Nations bodies, funds and programmes. The elimination of gender discrimination was one of the six priorities of Spanish external action in the area of human rights. A priority for his delegation during its presidency of the Security Council in October 2015 had been the high-level review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which had come fifteen years after its adoption. The recent adoption by consensus of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) on women and

peace and security and the commitments expressed by many Member States would further protect women in conflict. His Government had committed to take a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence perpetrated by members of the Spanish armed forces and security forces involved in international operations.

40. Violence against women was one of the most extreme manifestations of gender discrimination. His Government has acceded to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and would continue its work to comprehensively address violence against women in all its forms — including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, sexual assault and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation — as a matter of national priority.

41. His Government's gender-equality strategy included a €3 billion initiative to promote equal opportunities for the period 2014-2016. It would also take action to enhance women's participation and leadership in political, economic, social and cultural life at the domestic and international levels. In that connection, he wished to highlight the mission to Spain conducted by the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice in December 2014 as well as the constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women with respect to his country's periodic report in July 2015.

42. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia) said that important commitments aimed at promoting the rights of women and girls had resulted from major international conferences and conventions, which, in combination with various regional instruments, had improved women's enjoyment of their rights by reducing poverty, enhancing the provision of basic services, increasing women's participation in decision-making and establishing institutional mechanisms to promote the advancement of women. However, progress had not been uniform around the world, and the prevalence of poverty, violence, extremism, exclusion, discrimination, harmful traditional practices and trafficking affecting women in certain regions must be properly and more aggressively addressed at the national and international levels. The Sustainable Development Goals would play an important role in such efforts.

43. His Government had developed policies, strategies and legislation to implement the rights of women enshrined in the Ethiopian Constitution. Appropriate institutional and administrative frameworks had been established, and gender issues had been mainstreamed across national policies with positive results, including the early achievement of certain Millennium Development Goals. At the end of 2010, almost 1 million women had benefited from the development of microfinance institutions. Furthermore, women's share of the workforce had grown from 37.5 per cent in 2009 to 42.6 per cent in 2012, and 41 per cent of civil servants were female.

44. Landholding certificates were now issued to married couples and to women heads of household. In urban areas, 30 per cent of State-owned apartments were reserved for women, with the remaining 70 per cent allocated by lot to women and men. Women were entitled to 50 per cent of all jobs generated by small- and medium-sized enterprise packages. The grade point average required for admission to tertiary education was lower for women than for men, and 30 per cent of higher education places were reserved for female students, who were also eligible to compete with male students for the remaining places.

45. Women at higher education institutions also had access to extra tuition, and special arrangements were in place to support female students from low-income families. An additional 38,000 female health-care workers had been deployed in both rural and urban areas as part of his country's health extension program. Thus, women were not only beneficiaries of Government initiatives, but were also providing an extremely valuable contribution to the growth of the national economy. Nevertheless, further efforts would be required to achieve the full realization of women's rights.

46. *Mr. Mohamed (Guyana), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

47. **Ms. Skogen** (Norway) said that the processes initiated by the discussions on financing for development, the Sustainable Development Goals and climate change that had made 2015 a landmark year for the United Nations would require ambitious leadership, including in the area of gender equality. While much had been achieved since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), efforts must be

stepped up in order to fully achieve the goals that had been set.

48. Additionally, care must be taken to ensure that women and girls with disabilities or belonging to ethnic minorities were not left behind. The commitment to achieve full equality between women and men expressed by over 80 heads of State and Government at the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action organized by China and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was encouraging.

49. Full use could not be made of society's talents and resources unless girls and women were given the same access to education, employment and leadership positions as men. Convinced that equal access to education was essential to the achievement of full gender equality, her country had decided to double its support for education in its development cooperation efforts. Gender equality also involved the absence of violence against women at home, at school and in the workplace. Her Government was committed to ending female genital mutilation and child marriage through financial contributions to partner countries and international organizations, including the United Nations.

50. Gender-based hate speech on the Internet, including social media, should also be addressed. While no one should be silenced or subjected to threats when expressing themselves in public, and it was particularly important for the voices of women and defenders of human rights to be heard, hate speech triggered violence, created fear and caused women and girls to withdraw from public debate. Another priority should be to ensure that young people around the world, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and persons with disabilities, received comprehensive sexuality education, as increased knowledge would result in fewer unwanted pregnancies and, consequently, a reduction in illegal and unsafe abortions. In that connection, Norway commended the African Union for establishing a women's rights instrument that included access to medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape and incest or where the continuation of the pregnancy would endanger the mental or physical health of the woman.

51. The goal of achieving gender equality by 2030 would not be achieved if the issue continued to be discussed primarily among women. Her delegation therefore called on boys and men to become advocates for gender equality. All the male ministers in her Government had taken a stand for gender equality by joining the United Nations HeForShe campaign. Equal rights were of value in themselves, but they also increased economic productivity and prosperity. In conclusion, she called on Member States take action on the oft-repeated affirmation that women's rights were human rights.

52. **Mr. Alia** (Benin) said that women his Government had undertaken numerous initiatives, particularly since 2006, to ensure the dignity of women, who represented over half of his country's population and had an irreplaceable role in society. Measures included the adoption of a national policy on women and the establishment of a system to ensure that all Government bodies at the national and local level included a specific team responsible for ensuring gender mainstreaming across all development programmes and policies.

53. With regard to health care, maternal and child mortality rates had been reduced through free Caesarean sections, free malaria treatment and the implementation of a universal health insurance system in 2013. His Government had significantly increased school enrolment rates for girls by abolishing school fees for them at the kindergarten, primary and early secondary level, as part of an initiative that would soon be extended to include higher secondary-level education. Microfinance had been heavily promoted in order to enhance women's empowerment and economic participation. As a result of his Government's programme to provide microcredit to the poorest sectors of society, a large number of women were working their way out of poverty through income-generating activities.

54. Despite the efforts of the international community to address violence against women, 70 per cent of women around the world still experienced physical or sexual violence at least once during their lifetimes. In 2012 his Government had introduced a specific law on the prevention and suppression of violence against women to strengthen the provisions of the Beninese Constitution, under which all person were equal and had a right to physical integrity.



55. In spite of that progress, further efforts were needed to promote the development of women in Benin. In particular, the Government aimed to increase women's participation in decision-making bodies by implementing structural and normative reforms at the governance, economic and social levels. Another important challenge was to progressively and profoundly change the cultural perceptions of both men and women concerning the role of women in society.

56. **Mr. Koita** (Mali) said that since its independence, his country had made extensive efforts to improve the legal, social and economic status of women, including by becoming a party to and implementing almost all relevant regional and national conventions and establishing a Ministry for Women. Although Mali was still recovering from the serious political and security crisis of 2012, it had made considerable progress in the areas of girls' education, maternal health and reducing infant mortality. To address the specific needs of women in rural areas, his Government had set up programmes to develop their management skills and ensure equal access to land, production inputs and credit for income-generating activities.

57. Since the ratification by Mali of the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985, action had been taken to put an end to discriminatory sociocultural practices, such as female genital mutilation and early marriage, that hindered women's development and their effective participation in national development efforts. As a result of efforts to increase their access to decision-making positions, women were represented at all levels of the Malian Government and in the armed forces and security forces. The number of women in the national parliament had increased substantially, and a similar trend was expected to be seen in the upcoming municipal and regional elections.

58. His Government had complied with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) throughout the 2012 crisis. Women's representatives from the eight regions of the country had jointly developed specific strategies to achieve peace, national reconciliation and the socioeconomic reintegration of women and girls affected by the crisis. Women had also been involved in the inter-Malian dialogue that had culminated in the signature of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process and would play a similarly active role in the

Dialogue, Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission and the Agreement monitoring committee.

59. The Government was working to overcome challenges relating to the participation of women in the country's reconstruction, the socioeconomic reintegration of women and girls affected by the crisis and the establishment of an environment that would protect and promote the rights of women and girls. He called on the international community to support his Government's work to implement the Agreement, which would benefit everyone in Malian society, but particularly women and children, who had been the first victims of the crisis. Mali was committed to pursuing its efforts to promote the rights of women, as it was convinced that sustainable development policies could not produce the desired results unless women were able to enjoy their rights and participate in socioeconomic development and decision-making processes.

60. **Ms. Rahimova** (Azerbaijan) said that her Government attached high importance to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and had taken a number of significant steps in that regard, including the adoption of measures to ensure equal opportunities and support equal participation of women and men in public and social life. Her country had recently hosted a number of important international conferences concerning women's issues, and the Government recognized the important role of women's economic independence and participation in the achievement of gender equality and global development. Consequently, its development strategy for the period up to 2020 was largely focused on issues such as gender-based violence, equal opportunities on the labour market, the promotion of women at work and women's leadership opportunities.

61. Azerbaijan was also working to develop a national action plan on gender equality and a system to identify girls who were being kept out of school or forced into early marriage. A specific budget allocation had been made to ensure a steady increase in the gender mainstreaming process. As a result of her Government's actions to promote women's economic independence and participation, the rate of unemployment among women had decreased considerably, and an increasing number of women were occupying senior decision-making posts and starting their own businesses.

62. There were also ongoing efforts to increase the number of girls studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and laws introducing flexible working arrangements and affordable child care would be passed to help women enter and remain in the workforce. Her Government supported initiatives to promote the fundamental and human rights of girls and women, in particular those undertaken in collaboration with United Nations agencies and programmes. It was committed to eradicating violence against women in all its forms and had criminalized forced and early marriages.

63. Her country continued to suffer from ongoing conflict and the occupation of part of its territory, and was home to 1 million internally displaced persons and refugees. The Government was also taking essential action to integrate internally displaced women into society. The essential role that women could play in conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconciliation must be recognized. Furthermore, all parties involved in armed conflict must respect their obligation under international human rights and humanitarian law to protect women and girls, who continued to endure rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence.

64. There should be zero tolerance for the practice of using gender-based violence as a tactic of war, which was legally and morally unacceptable. All necessary measures must be taken to end impunity and bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice. Her Government would do everything in its power to ensure a safe future for women and called for the transparent implementation of all relevant international instruments in that regard.

65. **Mr. Mundanda** (Zambia) said that, to ensure that no one was left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Sustainable Development Goal 5 should be a priority. His Government was committed to achieving an inclusive development agenda guaranteeing the rights of all citizens and mainstreaming the gender perspective across all activities and programmes. Zambia had continued to review its policy and legislative framework to ensure compliance with international standards, and a gender equality and equity law was in the final stages of drafting. Labour laws were also being updated to protect women against exploitation and violence in the

workplace. His Government had also revised the national gender policy and national child policy in order to address new areas of concern such as early and forced marriage and to enhance children's well-being and enjoyment of their rights.

66. Zambia had developed a multi-sectoral mechanism to ensure implementation of the anti-gender-based violence law. A system of fast-track courts to provide short, fair trials for gender-based violence cases was also being piloted. The issue of violence against women also had broad implications for the health-care sector, in terms of physical infrastructure, staff training, policies, patient flow, referral networks and data-collection systems. The important role of national health-care systems in prevention, protection, prosecution and accountability in the context of gender-based violence should be better taken into account in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes.

67. The recent appointment of his country's first woman Vice-President reflected his Government's commitment to ensuring equitable gender representation at all levels of decision-making. The Chief Justice and 60 per cent of Supreme Court judges were also women. Similar efforts to appoint women to higher and more strategic political offices were being carried out in other areas of the Government. His country was also working to empower women and girls by addressing their practical needs, for example through the provision of banking services in rural areas, where poverty levels remained high.

68. **Ms. Rodríguez de Febres-Cordero** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the Bolivarian Revolution was by nature feminist, as its aim was to overcome historic patriarchy. Her country had taken steps to promote gender equality and empower women, including the establishment of the Ministry of Popular Power for Women and Gender Equality and the creation of a jurisdiction to rule on and prosecute gender-based violence. A comprehensive legal framework on gender equity protected indigenous and afro-descendant women and women with disabilities and criminalized femicide and other extreme forms of gender-based violence. Moreover, a third programme on gender equality and gender equity for 2013 to 2019 aimed to integrate a cross-cutting gender approach, uproot the feminization of poverty and inequality and combat gender-based discrimination.

69. Women occupied high-level positions in various branches of the Government and were widely represented in leadership positions in the Communal Councils. The National Electoral Council had adopted a decision to ensure gender parity in the National Assembly. The rate of women employment had risen from 84 per cent in 1999 to 91.5 per cent in 2015. Gains had also been made in education, with 93 per cent of girls enrolling in primary school and 79 per cent enrolling in secondary school during the 2012-2013 academic year. Nevertheless, much remained to be done in the struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment, hence the need to commit fully to including women in all areas of life and to eradicate all forms of violence against women.

70. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that Bulgarian women had an active role in society and participated on equal footing with men in political, economic and social decision-making processes. Two-thirds of magistrates in national courts were women, as were 65 per cent of civil servants, 43 per cent of members of Governmental business councils and over 30 per cent of municipal councillors. Moreover, several important offices, including those of Vice-President of the Republic and European Commissioner, were occupied by women.

71. The Bulgarian Constitution enshrined equality of all citizens before the law and equal access to electoral mandates, elected office and professional and social responsibilities. Women and men enjoyed equal civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights. European standards and international instruments on women's autonomy had been incorporated into domestic legislation and all relevant policies.

72. A national council for gender equality had been established in 2004, and a national strategy for the advancement of gender equality had formulated indicators for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls and to raise public awareness of discrimination and gender stereotypes. The strategy stressed that equal rights and autonomy for women were essential to consolidating democracy and encouraged men to participate fully in actions that promoted equality.

73. For its part, Bulgaria would redouble its efforts to combat gender-based discrimination and to eliminate wage gaps between men and women; to that end, it was working to enact a special law on gender equality. The

struggle against gender stereotypes must also be underscored. In closing, he said that his Government would continue to work to establish a culture of equality and inclusion and stressed the vital need to implement the relevant international agreements in that regard.

74. **Ms. Byaje** (Rwanda) said that gender equality and the empowerment of women were prerequisites to sustainable development, economic growth and a peaceful and prosperous world. No transformation could occur if over half of the world's population was left unattended. Slogans alone would not suffice; political will and leadership were needed at all levels. To that end, donors and the private sector should support the global commitment to gender equality. Equal access to economic resources for men and women must be ensured, and access to decision-making enhanced, paying special attention to the most vulnerable and providing marginalized groups with equal access.

75. Rwanda had achieved parity in academic enrolment, with over 95 per cent of girls enrolled in school. Measures had been adopted to ensure women access to health services. Mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS had decreased considerably, and treatment was increasingly available to all, more affordable and of better quality. Women had also been given access to land ownership and the right to possess assets separate from their spouse.

76. Equitable distribution of power had been further ensured and more opportunities extended to women and girls, guaranteeing that the gains were enshrined in the Constitution. As a result, there was a significant increase in the number of women with decision-making power, amounting to 64 per cent of members of Parliament and 50 per cent in the judiciary. Aware that legal and policy frameworks alone would not suffice, her Government would continue to strive to improve the lives of women and girls.

77. **Mr. Harari** (Libya) said that Libyan legislation upheld the fundamental rights of women, who were considered equal to men, and promoted their advancement and empowerment, in line with his country's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Libyan women were entitled to social security, education and health services, and retirement pensions and had the right to own property and participate in

economic and political activity, including the establishment of civil society institutions.

78. Women had an important role in the country's decision-making process during its transitional period. Libyan women held 16 per cent of seats in the Council of Deputies and had a major role in legislative election campaigns. Six women sat on the Constitution Drafting Assembly, ensuring that the country's new Constitution would favour gender balance in leadership positions. The increased involvement of Libyan women in civil society organizations and volunteer work was a new phenomenon in Libyan society since the beginning of the country's democratic experiment.

79. His Government was working to raise women's awareness of their rights and increase their involvement in decision-making, focusing on participation in national dialogue, support for women in the Constitutional Drafting Assembly and the collection of data on the role of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation. Persistent wage inequality and gender-based violence affected women of all backgrounds in developed and developing countries alike.

80. In closing, he expressed concern at the humanitarian situation of Palestinian women living under occupation, whose rights were trampled upon by the racist practices of the Israeli authorities, in violation of international human rights instruments. The international community must shoulder its responsibility in that regard and fulfil its obligation to protect the human rights of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the rights of all Palestinians.

81. **Ms. Al Shubaili** (Saudi Arabia) said that for the first time in Saudi Arabia's history, women would be candidates in municipal elections in December 2015. Her Government attached great importance to gender equality, particularly in the areas of economic growth, poverty elimination and achieving sustainable development. Equal opportunities in education and training were crucial to empowering women to participate fully in development.

82. The advancement of women had been integrated fully into her country's development programmes, with a view to granting women equal rights while allowing them to retain their Islamic and Arab identity. Saudi women actively participated in different areas of public life, as members of the Shura Council and candidates

in municipal elections. They were also appointed to diplomatic positions abroad and represented Saudi Arabia in international conferences.

83. The Ministry of Labour had taken steps to expedite the hiring of women in the private sector. Her Government's efforts in that regard had been noted in a recent World Bank report. Raising awareness of women's rights and changing traditional views on the role of women in society were a priority for Saudi Arabia, which endeavoured to eliminate obstacles to women's participation in society, culture and economic development. Several Government bodies were also cooperating with civil society organizations to raise women's awareness of their own rights with regard to vocational health services, paid educational leave, social protection services and personal status measures relating to registering marriage, divorce and births, and legal consultation.

84. **Ms. Issoufou** (Niger) said that Niger had established a national agency to combat trafficking in persons and a national commission to coordinate activities in that area. The equality of all citizens before the law was enshrined in her country's Constitution, which contained provisions requiring the State to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women and girls. Measures taken to eliminate gender-based violence included the enactment of a law on female genital mutilation, the establishment of a central service for the protection of women and children and the creation of centres for women victims of domestic violence and female genital mutilation. Studies had been conducted with a view to determining the causes and consequences of violence against women, and legal services were provided to its victims. Moreover, teachers and students were educated on gender-based violence, and facilitators were trained to lead awareness-raising campaigns.

85. Her Government's policy on promoting women's autonomy and their role in poverty eradication promoted income-generating activities and improved access to social services, particularly to rural women. A programme to promote women's autonomy allowed rural women to develop their skills, aimed to lighten women's domestic workload, supported agricultural production by granting women parcels of land and provided microcredit. A recently adopted decree on the national gender policy brought national programmes and projects into line with Niger's regional and international obligations.

86. **Ms. Deer** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that while women and girls were at the forefront of the international agenda, much remained to be done to ensure the protection and address the needs of women and girls in armed conflict. They remained vulnerable to forced displacement, random and targeted acts of violence and other suffering. The International Committee strove to ensure their protection under international humanitarian law, using a victim-centred approach that ensured tailored, safe, participatory and equal access to humanitarian aid for all. Owing to the disproportionate exposure of women and girls to sexual violence during armed conflict, States should provide safe and confidential access to medical care for the victims. Sexual violence must be duly investigated and prosecuted in a confidential manner.

87. Humanitarian interventions must take into account the vital community roles of women and girls — often widowed or orphaned by conflict and faced with restricted freedom of movement and property ownership — by involving them at all stages and designing targeted support to address a variety of specific individual needs. Developing adapted and informed responses required a systematic analysis of the different vulnerabilities related to gender, age and disability. Finally, the “do no harm” principle should remain at the centre of any response in order to ensure that the support provided would not fuel additional violence or exacerbate existing discrimination.

88. As States bore the primary responsibility to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law, their domestic legislation needed to integrate special protection and respect for women and the absolute prohibition of all forms of sexual violence. In view of the forthcoming 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, ICRC stood ready to continue supporting States in fulfilling their existing commitments to protect women and prevent violence against them and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and other applicable norms.

89. **Mr. Buckley** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the Order of Malta had been running health, education, agricultural and social programmes for women subjected to rape as a tactic of war in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1996, providing some 50,000 victims with a safe haven, counselling and skills training. The Order was active in over 30 countries in Africa.

Malteser International, its relief agency, had been combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Nairobi for a decade, establishing clinics and hospitals for pregnant women and children who were HIV positive and working to prevent mother-to-child transmission.

90. The agency also operated a programme that empowered young disadvantaged African women to earn a living by making and selling crafts, and had helped build a secondary school for girls in South Sudan. In closing, the Order of Malta welcomed the recognition in Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that much remained to be done with regard to combating AIDS and promoting maternal health and the empowerment of women.

91. **Mr. El Nour** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that migrant women represented 49 per cent of the total number of international migrants around the world, and 43 per cent of the total migrants in developing countries. Regardless of their location, more and more of them travelled of their own accord in pursuit of opportunity, empowering themselves in the process. Conversely, migrant women without the benefit of a legal or regulatory framework often found themselves in exploitative situations, their vulnerability compounded by their status as both migrants and women. Migration “hot spots” had emerged around the world and were often sites where migrant women fell victim to smugglers, ruthless recruiters and human traffickers.

92. The international community had witnessed a high incidence of gender-based violence and atrocities committed against migrant women in situations of forced migration, in addition to an unprecedented number — approximately 60 million — of displaced persons around the world, the impact of which was often absorbed by migrant women. In that regard, he welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (A/70/205) and wished to issue two calls to action: first, a greater number of countries should accede to and ratify the relevant international instruments, particularly the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Member of Their Families and; secondly, attention should be paid to the IOM International Recruitment Integrity System, which hoped to usher in fair employment and recruitment practices and to bridge gaps with respect to the recruitment of migrant workers around the world,

while providing a platform for sharing lessons and promoting best practices.

93. **Mr. Madiwale** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) affirmed the importance of recognizing the remaining work to be done with regard to the issues faced by women and girls. IFRC welcomed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the updated Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. The "leave no one behind" strategy was critical as far too many women, children and adolescents had little or no access to good health services. The annual death toll remained unacceptably high: 289,000 maternal deaths, 2.6 million stillbirths, 5.9 million under-five deaths, and 1.3 million adolescent deaths annually, most of which were preventable.

94. Over 50 per cent of maternal and child deaths occurred in countries affected by conflict, disaster and fragility, and with strained health systems. All stakeholders should ensure that essential supplies and commodities were immediately made available to women and children during emergencies. IFRC, through its 189 national societies and 17 million-strong body of volunteers worldwide, was able to reinforce health services through field hospitals, mobile health services and clinical care, and the rapid distribution of life-saving goods and services.

95. Gender-based violence, in particular during emergency situations, received limited funding and attention on the ground. To remedy that situation, all actors should scale up efforts to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable and marginalized, in particular through violence-prevention and response activities. IFRC national societies, such as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, took practical action at the local level. All stakeholders were encouraged to take greater joint action. In December, IFRC would focus attention on the issue of gender-based violence in emergencies at its 32nd International Conference. Efforts were also under way to formulate the organization's first resolution on the topic, which would, among others, propel preparedness and response efforts forward.

96. **Ms. Mucavi** (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)), speaking also on behalf of the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), said that the importance of the economic, political and social

empowerment of all women could not be overstated, especially in rural areas. Women represented 43 per cent of the agricultural work force worldwide, and as much as 70 per cent in some countries. Despite longer hours, greater expectations in terms of caregiving, and a greater financial burden, their access to agricultural resources, credit, health care, education, food and nutrition and political space was disproportionately limited. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provided the means to address that discrepancy; and the political and economic empowerment of rural women would be vital to its success.

97. On the International Day of the Girl Child, rural youth, in particular girls, were recognized as important agents for achieving food security and reducing poverty in the years to come. The relevant United Nations agencies recognized the importance of empowering rural women, as evidenced by the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in the context of sustainable development. FAO provided policy assistance on agriculture and food security by advancing women's access and ownership of lands.

98. IFAD invested in the inclusive and sustainable transformation of rural areas in order to shift agricultural production and farming practices, enhance access to markets and improve off-farm employment opportunities. WFP supported farmers through its food-for-asset creation programmes, farm-to-market initiatives, and local procurement or Purchase for Progress. Lastly, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women provided its own expertise. The joint programme had achieved much, but could achieve even more with greater funding. All were invited to join the aforementioned organizations at the 15 October event celebrating the International Day of Rural Women, and the annual observance of World Food Day by FAO, IFAD, WFP and the International Labour Organization on 16 October.

99. Lastly, she stressed that rural women lagged behind in every development indicator. Steps should be taken, therefore, to ensure that by 2030 their lives and livelihoods were vastly improved and that they were well equipped to fulfil their potential.

100. **Mr. Cassidy** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the international community had finally begun to accelerate the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into all institutional functions of

the United Nations system, showing many that women were agents of peace and progress on the path to development. ILO was committed to women's economic empowerment, primarily through increasing women's labour force participation and creating opportunities for decent work. Recent ILO estimates revealed that low labour force participation rates among women — 50 per cent for women as opposed to 77 per cent for men — represented an enormous loss of opportunity for the economic empowerment of women.

101. Should women's participation rates rise to the level of their male counterparts, then national gross domestic product could rise from between 5 per cent, as in the case of the United States of America, to 34 per cent, as in the case of Egypt. The best way to economically empower women was to create opportunities for decent work. ILO had long supported efforts to empower women through entrepreneurship-development programmes and facilitating the creation of successful businesses. However, though important, women's increased participation was not sufficient to achieve the goals of economic empowerment and gender equality. Instead, women's labour force participation should be supported by policies reflective of key ILO conventions in that regard.

102. Globally, women earned approximately 77 per cent of what men earned and were almost exclusively burdened with household chores and family responsibilities. Only 51 per cent of countries globally provided at least 14 weeks maternity leave, which left millions of women without adequate maternity protection. Violence at work affected women's ability to access and remain in employment, negatively affecting productivity and resulting in increased absenteeism. Furthermore, women were not often in decision-making positions at work, and though women managed over 30 per cent of all businesses, those tended to be micro- and small enterprises. Only 19 per cent of women sat on the boards of larger companies, while less than 5 per cent of the chief executive officers of the world's largest corporations were women.

103. To give more visibility to gender equality in the world of work, ILO had launched the Women at Work Initiative. It would continue to support maternity protection and work-family policies, considering that more than 800 million women workers still did not have adequate maternity protection. The international community should work together to design maternity protection and work-family policies that were more

inclusive, and supportive of gender equality. ILO would deal further with the issue of care work to ensure that such work, both paid and unpaid, was recognized through policies that addressed maternity, paternity, childcare and elder care needs.

104. The international community was encouraged to partner with ILO to support women's entry into the labour force and give more attention to active labour market policies. They should create a more supportive workplace culture that broke down occupational segregation and supported quality jobs for all. They should also continue to close the gender gap, which began in childhood and increased through the course of life. Not only was it important to ensure that everyone received quality education, training and skills development, it was crucial to formulate effective strategies for youth employment and to promote decent jobs for women.

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

105. **Mr. Saito** (Japan), replying to remarks made by the representatives of Republic of Korea on 12 October and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the current meeting, said that his Government attached great importance to respect for women's rights. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had requested that the plight of "comfort women" not be forgotten. It was also his wish that Japan remain perpetually faithful to such women, and that it lead global efforts to ensure that the twenty-first century was an era of respect for women's rights.

106. All property issues and claims between Japan and the Republic of Korea in relation to the Second World War, including the question of "comfort women", had already been settled by the Treaty of Peace with Japan and the relevant bilateral agreements. However, Japan had undertaken great efforts with regard to the issue of "comfort women", including its offer of concrete relief to former "comfort women" through the Asian Women's Fund.

107. With regard to property issues and claims between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it should be recalled that, with the signing of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, the leaders of both countries had agreed that, when their bilateral relationship was normalized, each would waive all claims as well as those of their nationals that arose from circumstances occurring prior to 15 August 1945. They

had also decided that property issues and claims would be discussed concretely during normalization talks.

108. The assertions contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences were based on erroneous facts and completely neglected the basic position of and efforts made by the Government of Japan thus far. His Government could not accept the criticism or the recommendations contained in the report and deeply regretted that inaccurate information was used as the basis of official reports and recommendations issued by the United Nations.

109. **Ms. Vodenikova** (Russian Federation), responding to statements made by the representatives of Georgia and Ukraine, said that both South Ossetia and Abkhazia were independent States and that the Russian Federation had never exercised effective control in their territories. Indeed, the State bodies of the two republics independently exercised full State authority in their territories and addressed issues, including the empowerment of women, independently. They had, in fact, been rather successful in that regard, especially given the ordeals that had befallen their peoples. The Georgian delegation was once again exaggerating a humanitarian issue, while failing naturally to mention the suffering caused to thousands of Georgians, Abkhazians, Ossetians and citizens of other nationalities by the armed conflict unleashed by Tbilisi in 2008.

110. Ukraine employed a similar tactic, seeking yet again to find an external enemy to blame for the misfortune of its own people. Kyiv's continuing blockade of the southeast of Ukraine had forced civilians, the majority of whom were women and children, to flee. According to data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Russian Federation was currently hosting about 750,000 refugees, who were provided with, inter alia, medical and psychological assistance, jobs, welfare payments, and places in nurseries and schools for children.

111. A report by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe had identified 14 cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in the Kharkov region in 2015 alone. The majority of those victims were forcibly displaced persons from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. The monitoring mission of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights had reviewed numerous complaints concerning the dismissal of young mothers and pregnant women, carried out in accordance with the provisions of Ukrainian law. Those were just a few examples of the flagrant human rights violations committed against women in Ukraine.

112. Her Government had repeatedly affirmed that Nadiya Savchenko had been charged with being an accessory to the murder of Russian journalists, a serious criminal offence. Her case was ongoing and, in that regard, the norms of Russian legislation regulating the conditions of detention of those suspected of criminal offences and their detention in custody had been applied. Those conditions corresponded to international standards.

113. **Mr. Hahn** Choonghee (Republic of Korea), responding to the remarks made by the representative of Japan, reaffirmed that the issue of "comfort women" had not yet been resolved. To do so, the Japanese Government should first fully acknowledge that the victims had been forced into sexual slavery, a crime against humanity. That principle had been highlighted by various United Nations reports, including those of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during periods of armed conflict, including internal conflict. Those reports had also confirmed that neither the Treaty of Peace with Japan nor any other bilateral treaties concluded thereafter had been concerned with sexual slavery as practiced by the Japanese military. Moreover, they both recommended that Japan accept legal responsibility and pay compensation to the victims.

114. The Committee against Torture, the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had also reaffirmed that the issue of "comfort women" remained unresolved. It had never been addressed during negotiations of the 1965 Agreement on the Settlement of Problems concerning Property and Claims and on Economic Co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea. Because the question had not been officially confirmed until the 1990s when the victims had begun to testify, it had not been covered by the 1965 Agreement. The Asian Women's Fund had been financed not by the budget of the Japanese Government, but through private fundraising. Korean victims had maintained from the outset that they could not accept so-called "atonement money" without



accompanying measures to restore their honour and dignity, including an official apology.

115. **Mr. Ri Song Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Japanese Government had consistently denied its criminal history. The Japanese Prime Minister had insulted former "comfort women" by referring to them as the victims of human trafficking. Furthermore, he had deliberately avoided issuing a formal apology to those victims in his statement marking the seventieth anniversary of Japan's Second World War defeat, even justifying the invasion of several Asian countries, including Korea. Japan should resolve to atone for its past crimes against humanity, including sexual slavery, rather than take issue with the non-existent human rights issues of others. That was all the more relevant given the recent anniversary of the Japanese army's defeat in the Second World War.

116. **Ms. Kupradze** (Georgia) said that the Russian Federation was an occupying power responsible for the illegal occupation of two integral parts of Georgian sovereign territory, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In fact, Russian occupation stretched further into Georgian territory, in violation of the rights of the women and girls that lived in the occupied territories and adjacent areas. Those rights were guaranteed under a number of international instruments, many of which the Russian Federation was party to. No discussion of Georgian women as the first victims of the conflict, the scores of forcibly displaced Georgians, their sufferings or the violations of their fundamental human rights could be had without acknowledging as their cause the action undertaken on behalf of or with the direct involvement of the Russian Federation, which exercised effective control over the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

117. The Russian delegation should recall the definition of illegal military occupation laid down under the international treaties adopted at the second Hague Conference, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols. That definition was applicable to the Russian Federation's occupation of the aforementioned regions of Georgia, and her Government would seize every opportunity to raise the issue until it was addressed in accordance with international human rights and international humanitarian law, and in full respect of the basic principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

118. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine) said that the Russian Federation used every available forum to try to convince the international community that Ukraine was embroiled in an internal conflict. The situation, however, was one of foreign aggression. Having already lost the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine now faced Russian aggression in Donbas. Ukrainian armed forces had captured two active Russian Federation special forces servicemen, who were accused of killing a Ukrainian soldier in Ukrainian territory. They had since been imprisoned. He wished to know what the Russian Federation was doing in Ukrainian territory.

119. Nadiya Savchenko, a member of both the Ukrainian parliament and the Council of Europe, enjoyed diplomatic immunity. He wondered how an individual fighting for their country could cross the border into an aggressor country. The ridiculousness of the Russian allegations against her was also perceived by distinguished international bodies such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament, as well as a number of countries. Ukraine appreciated their support and resolutions in favour of Ms. Savchenko and her immediate release from custody.

120. **Mr. Saito** (Japan) said that he would not rebut the remarks made by either the Republic of Korea or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The position of his Government remained unchanged. In the recent apology addressed to all former "comfort women", the Japanese Prime Minister had stated: "as Prime Minister of Japan, I thus extend anew my most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful exercises, and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women. I believe that our country, painfully aware of its moral responsibilities, with feelings of apology and remorse should face up squarely to its past history and accurately convey it to future generations. Respectfully yours, Prime Minister of Japan".

121. **Mr. Hahn Choonghee** (Republic of Korea) said that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasized human dignity and justice and called for no one to be left behind. "Comfort women", however, had been left behind. The advanced age of the surviving victims called for a swift resolution of the issue, and the Japanese Government should seek to uncover the truth, providing a historical lesson that would help to prevent the recurrence of similar events.

122. **Mr. Ri Song Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) reiterated that Japan should issue the sincere apology long been demanded by the international community for all of its crimes, including that of sexual slavery as practiced by its army. Japan should also put an end to human rights violations and discrimination against Korean residents in Japan.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*