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

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In the absence of Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Mr. Mohamed (Guyana), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 68: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (continued)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (continued) (A/69/41, A/70/162, A/70/222, A/70/267, A/70/289, A/70/315, A/69/926-S/2015/409, A/HRC/28/56 and A/HRC/28/56/Add.1)

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

1. **Mr. González Franco** (Paraguay) said that the Paraguayan Constitution enshrined children's right to development and to protection from abandonment, malnutrition, violence, abuse, trafficking and exploitation. With more than one third of its population under age 18, everything that Paraguay invested in its children would define its future. The most pressing problems — abuse and violence, child labour, human trafficking and living in the streets — disproportionately affected vulnerable or marginalized children, particularly disabled, indigenous and rural children. Since 2000, Paraguay had been gradually increasing its social spending, particularly on health and education, and had implemented major poverty reduction programmes. In 2010, it had expanded free and compulsory education to include preschool education, and if recent trends continued, it would achieve universal primary school enrolment in 2015. In 2008, it had eliminated fees for public health care and had rolled out a new health policy emphasizing prevention and early treatment, especially in rural areas. The National Plan for Comprehensive Early Childhood Development, 2010-2020, consolidated and improved on existing policies. Mindful of the many challenges remaining, Paraguay would continue to do its utmost to promote and protect the rights of children.

2. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, for the past five years, his country had been confronting a ferocious Wahhabi terrorist campaign, which sought to destroy the future of Syrian children. Armed terrorist groups were systematically attacking children in their places of worship, playgrounds and homes, depriving them of their education and driving them to the high seas in search of refuge. Some children

died at sea, while others faced exclusion and humiliation in countries that always claimed to be paragons of human rights. Children in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan were facing dangerous conditions because of the intransigent policies of Israel, which was not interested in their right to education and health under international law, in particular, under the Convention. It would not be possible to ensure an environment free from violence in the occupied Arab territories until Israeli violations and impunity came to an end. Armed terrorist groups, which were supported by known States in the Arab world, in the region and elsewhere in the world, were perpetrating crimes against Syrian children, indoctrinating them in violent extremist ideas, recruiting them and training them in military camps and forcing them to witness and even participate in the beheading of individuals and the stoning of women, all with the silent complicity of the international community. The international community was well aware that the refugee camps were rife with child recruitment, child rape and trafficking in babies, children and organs. It must condemn the recruitment of children in the Syrian Arab Republic and in refugee camps in neighbouring States with the knowledge of those States.

3. Despite those challenges, his Government was endeavouring to fulfil its obligations to children. The Ministry of Health was carrying out health initiatives, including measles and polio vaccination campaigns, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and his Government had reopened schools that had been used as terrorist recruitment centres.

4. **Mr. Amoros Núñez** (Cuba) said that the progress made towards the realization of children's rights worldwide had been insufficient, reflecting the uneven distribution of wealth between North and South and even within industrialized nations. The ills affecting children could not be overcome in the absence of a more just and equitable world order.

5. Cuba had been implementing policies and programmes for children since 1959, long before its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Child hunger and illiteracy, insanitary conditions and discrimination were problems of the past; no Cuban children participated in armed conflict, there were no street children and there was no child labour, child trafficking, illegal adoption or servitude. Cuba allocated more than half of the national budget to health, education and social assistance and provided free health

care and education for all. Infant mortality had fallen from 60 per 1,000 live births in 1959 to 4.2, and in 2015 Cuba had become the first country in the world confirmed by the World Health Organization to have eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and syphilis. Furthermore, according to the World Bank, it had the best education system in the world. All of those gains had been achieved despite the economic and financial blockade imposed by the United States for more than 50 years.

6. With its recent ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), Cuba was a party to the eight core conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO). It had also recently submitted its periodic reports on the implementation of the first two optional protocols to the Convention.

7. **Ms. Sukontasup** (Thailand) said that Thailand had been one of the first countries to ratify the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure and was actively promoting an understanding of it, especially among children. It highly valued the work of UNICEF and, as a member of the Executive Board, aimed to strengthen cooperation between UNICEF and Member States. Within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), it was the coordinating country for the drafting of the ASEAN regional plan of action on elimination of violence against children, and it had actively contributed to the development 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. On 16 October, it would be participating in the high-level panel discussion on safeguarding the rights of girls in the criminal justice system.

8. Her Government had launched a programme to ensure access to health care for newborns; as of October 2015, low-income parents who registered the birth of their babies were eligible for financial assistance. Thai law protected children born by assisted reproductive technology; it provided safeguards for the surrogate mother, the parents and their child and prohibited commercial surrogacy, which could lead to the sale or commercial exploitation of children. Thailand had declared improving education a national priority in 2012 and was committed to making education accessible to all, including children with disabilities. It had recently passed a law amending the Criminal Code to punish the production, dissemination

and possession of child pornography, including online pornography.

9. **Ms. Mansouri** (Algeria) said that, considering the thousands of children affected by armed conflict, the targeting of schools by non-State actors, the use of schools by armed forces and the recruitment and use of children for military purposes, her Government welcomed the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict and applauded the progress achieved through the United Nations “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign. Calling for more data and research on violence against children, she reiterated her country’s support for the UNICEF “Make the Invisible Visible” initiative.

10. Algeria had ratified all of the major international instruments for the promotion of children’s rights and it submitted periodic reports to the treaty bodies concerned, gave due attention to their recommendations and had made legislative changes to comply with its treaty obligations. In July 2015, it had adopted a new law to improve the legal framework for safeguarding children against violence, and it was implementing a national action plan for children for 2008-2015, as well as a national strategy to combat violence against children. Through public investment, national immunization programmes, disease prevention and birth spacing initiatives, it had succeeded in reducing infant mortality from over 28 per 1,000 live births in 2009 to less than 24 in 2014, and by making education free and compulsory for all children up to age 16, it had achieved almost universal enrolment.

11. **Ms. Vodenikova** (Russian Federation) said that the promotion and protection of children’s rights was a priority of Russian domestic policy and international cooperation. Internationally, children in situations of humanitarian crisis or armed conflict were a particular subject of concern, including in the Middle East, North Africa and South-East Ukraine. Her Government categorically condemned all violations of the rules of international humanitarian law applicable to children in armed conflict, as well as the wounding and killing of children, whether in the context of deliberate attacks or terrorist acts, or the indiscriminate use of force. It welcomed the efforts of the international community to combat the growing global trend of violence against children. It was particularly concerned about the welfare of Russian children who suffered violence and humiliation at the hands of their adoptive foreign parents; unfortunately, its efforts to ensure fair

punishment had often been snubbed by local legal systems.

12. The Russian Federation urged those States that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention. It took its treaty obligations seriously and had recently submitted its initial report on the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

13. The Russian authorities were continually reviewing the protection of children's rights. During the second phase of the National Children's Strategy for 2012-2017, steps were being taken to reduce poverty among families with children, address violence against children and rehabilitate victims, create a safe environment for children, ensure the accessibility and quality of education, and expand the participation of children in decision-making on matters affecting their interests. A broad range of government bodies and officials oversaw the protection of the rights and legal interests of children. For example, the Children's Rights Ombudsman was responsible for working with the regional children's ombudsmen and maintained foreign contacts in order to protect the rights of Russian children abroad, including in connection with international adoptions.

14. **Mr. Hahn** Choonghee (Republic of Korea) said that investing in children was both a moral imperative and a practical path to global transformation. Particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable children: children in situations of armed conflict or humanitarian crisis, refugee and migrant children and children with disabilities. It was especially important to realize the rights of girls. Worldwide, girls continued to fare worse than boys in terms of nutrition, health care, education and violence. More effort and resources should be allocated to girls' education, in view of its importance to social, economic and political progress. Under the "Better Life for Girls Initiative" launched in September 2015, the Republic of Korea would provide health- and education-related official development assistance for the most vulnerable girls in developing countries over the next five years.

15. The World Education Forum 2015, hosted by his country, had established a road map for achieving more accessible and inclusive, higher-quality education as well as expanded opportunities for lifelong learning by 2030. The Republic of Korea was championing global citizenship education and would continue to support

the establishment of vocational and technology schools in developing countries. In collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, it would be scaling up support for projects to provide advanced information and communications technologies to schools in developing countries.

16. **Ms. Zhanatova** (Kazakhstan) said that, working in close cooperation with UNICEF, Kazakhstan had attained many of its Millennium Development Goals Plus targets, and it looked forward to continued cooperation as it took on the Sustainable Development Goals. It would speak out internationally on issues affecting children and sustainable development and had proposed in September 2015 that each State should consider transferring 1 per cent of its annual defence budget to the Sustainable Development Goals Fund.

17. Since gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan's gross domestic product had grown 19-fold, enabling it to invest 50 per cent of its budget in the social sectors. It had made secondary education free and was approaching universal enrolment. It was taking steps to promote functional literacy and eradicate child labour. To improve the quality of life of children with disabilities, it had enacted laws protecting their social, cultural, educational, personal and political rights and had made some 70 per cent of schools barrier-free. In 2014, the Criminal Code had been amended to penalize the production of child pornography. Non-governmental organizations working on behalf of children were represented in the Government, on an expert parliamentary council and on the Human Rights Commission. Kazakhstan had 19 juvenile courts, as well as children's rights offices in every region, and 20 cities were participating in the UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities Initiative. The new United Nations regional hub in Almaty would undoubtedly promote the care and protection of the region's children by facilitating capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and rigorous monitoring.

18. **Ms. Bardaoui** (Tunisia) said that the international community must back its efforts to implement the Convention of the Rights of the Child with political will. A longstanding party to the Convention, Tunisia had promulgated a national child protection code in 1995. The Constitution of 2014 expressly required the State to guarantee children's rights and ensure full protection for all children

without discrimination, in accordance with their best interests.

19. Tunisia had declared 2015 Child Protection Year. It attached great importance to strengthening the child protection laws, preventing violence against children and including the protection of children in public policies and programmes. In cooperation with UNICEF, it was working to stop violence and teach global citizenship in schools. It provided free basic education for all, including children with physical or learning disabilities, and penalized parents who did not send their children to school; and it was making every effort to provide quality education that met job market demand.

20. **Ms. Grignon** (Kenya) said that Kenya's obligations under the Convention and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child had been domesticated in its Constitution and the Children Act of 2001. By introducing free primary education, it had improved gender parity and achieved universal enrolment at the primary level, and it was committed to increasing the resources allocated to primary and secondary education, including enhanced access for girls, which would also help eliminate harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. Those practices were prohibited by law, and her Government was committed to ensuring that the law was enforced and perpetrators were prosecuted.

21. In accordance with the constitutional right to health of every Kenyan, her Government strove to ensure universal access to health care, including reproductive health care for adolescents. By providing free prenatal and post-partum care at public facilities, it had brought about a reduction in infant and maternal mortality rates. Kenya had effective social safety nets for children, including food subsidies and a cash transfer programme for orphans and vulnerable children; those programmes had been effective in contributing to the protection of children's rights and tackling the problems of malnutrition. Her Government had developed a comprehensive plan to respond effectively to violence against children which combined long-term investment in prevention with a commitment to improving the functioning of State institutions. It was in the midst of a vital statistics registration drive, and it was harnessing the power of information and communications technologies to deliver results for children and adolescents.

22. The success of the Sustainable Development Goals would hinge in large measure on the international community's ability to end conflict. Meanwhile, the plight of children affected by war should remain high on the agendas of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

23. **Ms. Alsalami** (United Arab Emirates) said that radical solutions were needed to protect children from abhorrent practices and extremist propaganda and keep them safe during and after conflicts. In February 2015, the United Arab Emirates had hosted a United Nations Population Fund meeting on reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health in humanitarian crises, whose outcome document had been incorporated in the Secretary General's "Every Woman Every Child" global strategy. Her Government had recently acceded to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and would be hosting the second #WeProtect Children Online Global Summit in November 2015.

24. In early 2015, the United Arab Emirates had amended its law on human trafficking to strengthen the penalties for trafficking in children, and it was about to adopt a law to protect children and adolescents in all judicial, regulatory, administrative and academic proceedings. It was developing a national mother and child strategy for 2015-2021, as well as an action plan on children with disabilities, which included their integration into regular classrooms. It had also launched a pilot anti-bullying programme at the start of the 2015-2016 academic year.

25. **Ms. Goldrick** (Nicaragua) said that the Nicaraguan Constitution accorded constitutional status to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Her Government had translated the Convention into a wide range of social programmes, including a school meals programme, a programme to assist persons with disabilities, a birth registration programme and a comprehensive early childhood development programme, through which 1.2 million families would receive home visits and training during the 2012-2016 period. The new Family Code provided for the expedited hearing of applications to register births or receive food or social assistance. Another recently adopted law on the protection of women of all ages would help to protect young and adolescent girls against violence. Her Government considered the restoration of children's rights to be the shared responsibility of the State, the family and the

community. Its policies were based on the premise of children's right to play a central role in the changes in their lives, their families and their communities. Its programmes had been recognized by various United Nations entities, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, for reducing infant malnutrition; ILO, for combating child labour; and UNICEF, which considered Nicaragua a regional model.

26. **Mr. Joshi** (India) said that an unprecedented surge in armed conflict, humanitarian crises and migration flows had added to the challenges for implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. India was pursuing inclusive growth, bearing in mind the best interests of Indian children. Through sustained efforts, it had eliminated polio and maternal and neonatal tetanus. It had achieved full access to and gender parity in primary schools and was shifting its focus to encouraging girls' enrolment and providing affordable, quality education at the secondary level.

27. The 2013 National Policy for Children took a rights-based approach to child survival, development and protection, with a particular focus on girls, children with disabilities and children from marginalized communities, and emphasized children's participation in decisions affecting them. The 2013 National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy sought to ensure universal and equitable access to education and accorded priority to survival, health care and nutrition for all children through decentralized programmes, including programmes for the prevention of HIV infections at birth and prohibition of discrimination against HIV-positive children. Under the National Food Security Act of 2013, needy children were eligible for free meals. An integrated early childhood development scheme focused on children under age 3, pregnant women and nursing mothers, and another scheme aimed to promote adolescent girls' all-round development and self-reliance. A tracking system for mothers and children ensured that pregnant woman and children under age 5 received health care and immunizations.

28. Laws had been enacted to provide for the strengthening of national, state and local child protection structures, and integrated anti-human trafficking units had been established. India also had laws addressing child marriage and child labour. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights was responsible for promoting and protecting

children's rights, and technology and social media were used to raise awareness of those rights, especially among adolescents.

29. India stressed the need for the international community to contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by building capacities, training key personnel, mobilizing resources and ensuring adequate funding, including through fulfilment of official development assistance commitments.

30. **Mr. Al-Obaidi** (Iraq) said that, especially in countries where children represented the largest population group, their care, socialization and protection were vital to prevent future social problems and unrest. The terrorist attacks of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) had brought about the forced migration and displacement of children, interrupting their education and jeopardizing their health. Children were suffering from many diseases, including malnutrition, in areas under siege, and the situation was exacerbated by rising poverty. Children were being killed, orphaned and recruited by terrorist groups, who kidnapped and brainwashed them.

31. Stopping of the recruitment of children by ISIL was a top priority of his Government. Earlier that year, it had organized an international conference on the subject, which had produced a final declaration providing a road map for ending the recruitment of children. In addition, with the help of the tribes and the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Iraqi security forces were gradually taking back the areas held by ISIL.

32. Despite the many challenges facing his Government, it had done much to improve the situation of children and to comply with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition to ratifying the first two optional protocols and submitting the reports required under the Convention and protocols, it had operationalized the role of the Child Welfare Authority, which was responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention. It had also devoted attention to minority children, who were taught in their own languages, and to increasing awareness of children's rights. It had enacted laws criminalizing the recruitment of child soldiers and combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Lastly, it had operationalized the committee on women's and children's affairs in the Council of Representatives and the regional legislatures.

33. *Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Chair, took the Chair.*

34. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica) said that, despite his country's high debt and other economic constraints, it continued to invest heavily in its children. It had achieved virtually universal enrolment and equitable gender distribution in schools, thanks in part to tuition-free primary and secondary education, and it was addressing the situation of children in conflict with the law by adjusting its legislation and policies and ensuring that children were taken into detention only as a last resort and for the shortest time possible. However, while it was able to uphold basic child rights, it continued to confront challenges in providing quality services.

35. Children bore the brunt of the global economic and financial crisis, which increased their risk of homelessness, hazardous labour, trafficking, sexual exploitation, abuse and violence, as well as the likelihood of inadequate access to health care, food, water and sanitation. Children in situations of conflict or humanitarian disaster were at elevated risk, as were disabled and minority children under any circumstances. In view of the persistent challenges for the protection of children, Jamaica wholeheartedly supported the renewal of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

36. **Ms. Wynne-Hughes** (Canada) said that as a result of the efforts of Canada and its many partners, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development set specific targets for nutrition, newborn and child health, education, child labour, violence against children, birth registration and child, early and forced marriage. Canada was working to address those complex issues from both a human rights and a development perspective. It had hosted the Saving Every Woman, Every Child: Within Arm's Reach Summit in May 2014 and would continue to focus on facilitating proven, effective interventions, with an emphasis on improving accountability for results. It supported the renewal of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health. In 2014, Canada had been among the sponsors of the landmark General Assembly resolution 69/156 on child, early and forced marriage, which should be translated into national-level planning and action.

37. Despite increasingly robust international norms and monitoring, growing numbers of children were exposed to armed conflict, resulting in a surge of violations that compelled Member States to do their utmost to implement those norms. Canada was striving to end such violations through development assistance

and multilateral efforts, including as chair of the Group of Friends of Children in Armed Conflict. It called for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict. Her Government had also contributed to initiatives for preventing child recruitment and demobilizing child soldiers, including \$2 million announced in July 2015 for the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. It would continue to work with its partners to ensure that children everywhere grew up free from fear.

38. **Ms. Dagher** (Lebanon) said that the situation was bleak for the 230 million children affected by war, many of whom lacked access to education, health services, nutritious food, sanitation and safe shelter. If the international community did not act quickly, they would become a lost generation. Despite the challenge of hosting more than 1.2 million Syrian refugees, most of whom were women and children, Lebanon continued to endeavour to promote and protect the rights of children. It had adopted a national strategy for the protection of children against all forms of violence, and it was implementing a national action plan for the elimination of the worst forms of labour, in close collaboration with ILO. Education for all remained a priority. In May 2015, it had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, and in September, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the World Bank and bilateral donors, it had launched a nationwide back-to-school campaign to double the number of Syrian refugee children who had access to certified basic education. However, in education as in other sectors, the protracted refugee crisis exceeded the scope of Lebanese resources, endangering decades of development efforts and achievements. Lebanon looked forward to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit with two priorities in mind: ensuring dignity for all and building resilience for hosting communities, especially in developing countries.

39. **Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Sustainable Development Goals should provide momentum for overcoming new and old challenges, including the scourge of war. In that connection, children growing up poor and unequal, with insufficient education, health care and food, were a potential threat to future peace and security. For decades, his country had hosted hundreds of thousands of refugee children, enrolling them free of charge in its schools, and it would continue to invest in those

children's future, despite the financial burden and the miniscule international support received to date.

40. In 2015, the Islamic Republic of Iran had launched a comprehensive database on children to collect the disaggregated data needed to develop better-targeted policies. It had also organized a series of national meetings on the role of religious leaders in preventing violence against children, focused on prevention of gender-based, ethnic and religious discrimination, neglect, forced marriage and sexual offences against children.

41. **Ms. Stener** (Norway) said that the right to education, particularly girls' right to education, was a core priority of her Government, which had hosted the Oslo Summit on Education for Development in July 2015 to mobilize political and economic support for education in development. Given the progress made towards gender equity at the primary level, efforts to promote girls' education could begin to focus on the secondary level. Challenges for girls in the areas of poverty, equity and health, including female genital mutilation, child, early and forced marriage, and violence and sexual abuse, must be addressed.

42. Norway was deeply concerned about the pervasiveness of violence against children and hoped that the Sustainable Development Goals and targets would create new momentum for combating that problem. Protecting children from violence required the active participation of municipalities, local professional groups, and the private and voluntary sectors. Norway had launched an action plan for 2014-2017 comprising more than 40 measures for combating violence and sexual abuse against children and adolescents. It also encouraged all countries to ban corporal punishment for children. Norway strongly supported the ongoing global studies on bullying and children deprived of their liberty. It urged all States to implement the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, in which connection the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/UNICEF Global Programme on Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice should prove extremely useful. It supported the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign and had hosted the Oslo Conference on Safe Schools. Protecting Education from Attack" conference in May 2015, which had produced the Safe Schools Declaration, an important tool in that regard.

43. **Ms. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that for over 48 years, Israel's military occupation had denied Palestinian children their most basic human rights, and the situation was continuing to deteriorate, as children bore the brunt of increasingly oppressive, violent and illegal Israeli policies and practices and settler terrorism. Israel's recent relaxation of the rules of engagement for the occupying forces had encouraged the shooting and killing of Palestinians and led to numerous gruesome violations against innocent children and adolescents. Israel, the occupying Power, continued to act with impunity, exempt from its international obligations by the collective failure to uphold the law and apply it to the question of Palestine.

44. Israeli settler terrorism was also on the rise, under the protection of Israeli occupying forces, with no Palestinian child considered too young to be spared harm, resulting in the killing and orphaning of young children and babies. Palestinian children continued to be kidnapped, detained and tortured by Israeli forces, often in violent and traumatizing night raids. In occupied Gaza, the devastation wrought by Israel's deadly siege in 2014 was magnified by its illegal blockade, now in its eighth year.

45. Israeli terrorism continued with impunity. In the context of the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, therefore, the State of Palestine once again called on the Secretary-General to include the Israeli Government, the Israeli security forces and the settler militias in the list of grave violators of child rights annexed to the report. It also called on Israel to comply with its international obligations, including its obligations under the Convention, and to lift the blockade immediately, and appealed to the international community to work relentlessly to end the occupation and to provide international protection for the Palestinian people until they could live in peace, dignity, freedom and security in an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

46. **Mr. Auza** (Observer for the Holy See) said that, as the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals drew near, the gaps and failures were as worrisome for children as the achievements were impressive. Much more needed to be done to strengthen national health and other service delivery systems, overcome financial barriers to children's access to education and health care, end the practices,

habits and prejudices that perpetuated inequalities between boys and girls and harness the benefits of modern technology to reach the children left behind and help children develop their potential.

47. The number, intensity and savagery of ongoing conflicts challenged the international community's ability to protect children in situations of armed conflict. Terrorists and extremists committed unspeakable violence against children; in some cases, the recruitment of children was systematic and child rights were violated by all parties to a conflict in total impunity. In that connection, his delegation commended the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. He condemned the use of sexual violence against children as a strategy of war, noting that in many conflict zones, the Catholic Church ran institutions that provided specialized support to child victims and their families. In areas of armed conflict, faith communities had demonstrated that they were essential in the recovery and reintegration of child victims into normal life. Children should be protected not only during armed conflict, but also during ceasefire and peace negotiations, and girl victims of recruitment or abuse required special reintegration assistance.

48. In all regions of the world, the scourge of sexual exploitation of children remained a grave concern. Within countries and across borders, children were sold and trafficked for prostitution, pornography and organ harvesting, usually with impunity owing to legal gaps, fear of stigma and reprisals and insufficient data and resources. Violence against children in all of its forms should serve as a grave summons to an examination of conscience and a call to action.

49. **Mr. Kydyrov** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the Kyrgyz Constitution required the State to consider the best interests of the child at all times. The Children's Code provided protection for all children, including children in difficult situations, children with disabilities and children in conflict with the law. Kyrgyzstan had also adopted many laws to promote and protect the rights of children, which had been recognized by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its concluding observations on Kyrgyzstan's combined third and fourth periodic reports (CRC/C/KGZ/CO/3-4).

50. Kyrgyzstan's social protection development programme up to the year 2017 set out measures for identifying and working with children and families in difficult situations. To address the major problem of

abuse and violence against children, including sexual violence, his Government was implementing an action plan that had resulted thus far in the establishment of rehabilitation and crisis centres, specialized units and, most recently, a children's help line. Through its national strategy on reproductive health, it had reduced infant mortality from 66 per 1,000 births in 1997 to about 20 in 2014. In 2014, it had launched a programme to create a fair and efficient juvenile justice system.

51. Kyrgyzstan had achieved almost universal enrolment in school, and its national education strategy to 2020 aimed to improve the quality of education and ensure equal access for all. As a first step, it had recently decided to invest massively in the construction of rural schools. His Government believed that real sustainable development could not be achieved without strengthening the role of the family, which should have primary responsibility for the upbringing and protection of children. It commended the assistance provided by UNICEF in protecting the rights of Kyrgyz children and looked forward to continued constructive cooperation.

52. **Mr. Uğurluoğlu** (Turkey) said that children were afforded special protection under the 2010 Constitution. Turkey's national child rights strategy and action plan for 2013-2017 aimed to improve children's living standards by identifying targets in the areas of health, education and social inclusion and to provide adequate protective and preventive measures. A sponsor of General Assembly resolution 66/170 on the International Day of the Girl Child, Turkey had launched various cross-sectoral and grass-roots campaigns to encourage girls' enrolment in school. It was in the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure and was a party to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the Convention on Contact concerning Children.

53. Turkey assisted children in various emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations through its comprehensive humanitarian and development assistance programmes, including projects carried out in Afghanistan and Somalia focusing on education and health services. With the changing nature of conflicts, the international community must take concerted action to help children in situations of armed conflict, who were subject to mass abduction, torture and sexual violence, as well as attacks in schools and hospitals.

Protracted conflict had given rise to the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, with an increasing influx of displaced populations causing even further difficulties for vulnerable groups, including children; it was high time for the United Nations to fulfil its responsibility of ensuring a safe future for the world's children.

54. Turkey provided safe refuge for over 2 million Syrian refugees and had also ensured that cross-border humanitarian assistance reached millions of people in dire need in Syria. Although it was doing its utmost to meet the growing needs of the child refugees, especially for education and health care, it had been unable to provide schools, classrooms and teachers for two thirds of the 600,000 school-age refugee children. Proper funding for the "No Lost Generation" initiative would be most helpful.

55. **Mr. Gumende** (Mozambique) said that his country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two optional protocols, as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). It had subsequently enacted legislation guaranteeing the many rights recognized in those treaties. Its 2013-2019 national action plan for children set targets and identified actions to be undertaken by Government institutions in partnership with non-governmental and international organizations, the private sector and civil society, and it was in the process of revising its national strategy on basic social security, with a view to covering the most vulnerable and needy populations.

56. Mozambique's continued strong economic performance had allowed it to invest in the social sectors, where it had worked to expand health services, extend the health care and school networks and increase school enrolment, in partnership with civil society. As a result, infant and maternal mortality had dropped significantly, and more children were enrolled in school. It had also implemented social protection programmes for families and children in vulnerable situations, such as a programme to place orphans and other vulnerable children in foster families.

57. Mozambique continued to face enormous challenges, including a high prevalence of violence against children in the home; child labour, child trafficking and unsafe child migration; chronic

malnutrition; and a lack of resources to assist children with disabilities. As a participant in the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage, it was drafting a national strategy emphasizing communication and social mobilization, quality education and girls' enrolment and retention in school, girls' empowerment, strengthening of health care services and reproductive health education. His Government would continue to work with development partners, the private sector and civil society in the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

58. **Ms. Yagushi** (Japan) said that, in view of the global gender gap in secondary education, Japan would be providing assistance in excess of \$350 million over a three-year period starting from 2015 to ensure high-quality education for women and girls. Her Government had recently announced a new international cooperation strategy for education that emphasized inclusive, quality education and the need to secure access to education for children in situations of armed conflict and poverty, and would promote education assistance in poor countries or regions.

59. With respect to the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict, Security Council resolution 2225 (2015) should be followed up with action plans and programmes. Japan would continue to cooperate with UNICEF on the social rehabilitation of former child soldiers. It supported the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign, while recognizing that the challenge remained to discern how to extend the campaign to non-State militaries.

60. Child poverty had become a social issue in Japan in recent years. In response, her Government had adopted a policy outline to combat child poverty and break the cycle of poverty which included academic stipends, job assistance for guardians and continued research on child poverty. It was also developing a public-private initiative on child poverty and support for child development.

61. **Ms. del Águila Castillo** (Guatemala) said that Guatemala had launched a wide effort to provide culturally relevant, quality education, which included the introduction of new reading and arithmetic programmes. To strengthen bilingual education, it had trained bilingual specialists, developed regional primary school curriculums and provided support for teacher training, in addition to distributing workbooks in six indigenous languages. In response to the exodus

of unaccompanied children, it had taken steps to adapt consular protection to the needs of Guatemalan children in Mexico and in the United States of America. Guatemala reiterated that, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, migrant children should not be detained, but should be allowed to stay with relatives or guardians.

62. To counter mass kidnappings, violent attacks on children and the use of children as human shields or suicide bombers, Member States must improve their cooperation at all levels, through the exchange of intelligence and information, in order to strengthen their capacity to prevent, document and address such phenomena. Combating impunity should continue to be a major focus of those efforts.

63. **Mr. Abdullahi** (Nigeria) said that Nigeria was a party to the Convention and its first two optional protocols. Its Child Rights Act of 2003, which was rooted in the Convention and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, included provisions establishing a child justice administration and prohibiting female genital mutilation, street hawking, child marriage, exposure of children to pornographic material and trafficking in children, among other crimes. A national priority agenda for vulnerable children (2013-2020) had been developed, and funding had been made available for related public awareness activities. In September 2015, following a national survey revealing high levels of violence against children, his Government had launched a year-long campaign to end such violence. The findings of the survey had underscored the need for the Government, civil society, communities, parents and families to address the issue.

64. Nigeria condemned the heinous acts committed against Nigerian children, particularly in the north-east, by Boko Haram, and would ensure that the perpetrators of those atrocities were held accountable for their actions. It was working with Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger to defeat Boko Haram within the framework of a multinational task force. It had established a victims' support fund to provide financial assistance to affected Nigerian communities, create jobs and rebuild damaged infrastructure, and after endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration, it had also established a safe schools initiative.

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

66. **Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) said that Sudan had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two optional protocols, as well as the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). It supported the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. Domestically, the Armed Forces Act, the Police Act and the National Security Act prohibited the recruitment of children under the age of 18. Sudan had put in place an integrated system of juvenile and restorative justice based on the Child Act of 2010, and after enacting a law against trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, it had hosted the first African Union regional conference on human trafficking in the Horn of Africa in October 2014. It had set up child protection units in the armed forces as well as family and child protection units in the Ministry of the Interior. It had established the National Council for Child Welfare, and had appointed a prosecutor to investigate accusations of human rights violations, especially against children, in Darfur since the start of the conflict in 2013. It had also established a fact-finding commission to investigate the abduction of children and their use as soldiers in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. On a more general level, in 2013, it had launched a 10-year national action plan for the protection of human rights in Sudan.

67. In view of Sudan's demonstrated willingness to respond to all concerns expressed by UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as its progress on developing an action plan on children in armed conflict, it should no longer be included in the list of countries in the annex to the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict. In closing, he stressed the need to help countries put an end to conflicts; to address the root causes of the use of children in armed conflict and to follow up on armed groups' agreements to end the recruitment of children with reinforcing measures and to work transparently with Governments on all measures related to children and armed conflict in a way that respected national sovereignty. Lastly, he reiterated that the Secretary-General's reports should contain only verified information, free from innuendo.

68. **Ms. Sabja** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that her country had ratified the Convention in 1990 and had domesticated its provisions, primarily through the Code for Children and Adolescents, which applied throughout

the national territory and established the principles of the best interests of the child and non-discrimination. The National Development Plan, adopted in 2006, took a comprehensive, intersectoral approach to combating child malnutrition and illiteracy, violence against children and maternal and infant mortality. It aimed to accelerate the reduction of maternal and infant mortality rates, eliminate chronic early childhood malnutrition and substantially reduce acute malnutrition and anaemia among infants. To that end, a conditional cash transfer programme had been established for pregnant women and children under age 2. Her Government was committed to implementing the Convention through comprehensive measures that addressed the well-being of children, the family and the community from an intergenerational perspective. Progress in global efforts to eradicate poverty would require a full commitment from the international community and the mobilization of the necessary resources and support as well as a multifaceted approach to promoting and protecting the rights of children.

69. **Ms. Hu Miao** (China) said that her Government encouraged those countries that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention as soon as possible to ensure that there was no weak link in the international protection of children's rights. Despite significant achievements in protecting children's rights to life, health and education, a number of challenges, including armed conflict, poverty and discrimination, had yet to be overcome. The first priority was to maintain world peace, so that children everywhere were spared the scourge of war. The international community should make concerted efforts to create a peaceful and stable environment at both global and regional levels and, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, seek a solution to regional and international disputes through peaceful means, prevent and put an end to armed conflicts and ensure the attainment of children's right to survival.

70. The international community must promote inclusive development through implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the principle of the best interests of the child, and according priority to children's needs for survival and development. Poverty reduction and the promotion of economic development in developing countries would lift tens of millions of children out of poverty, allowing them to realize their right to development.

71. A third priority was to step up international cooperation so as to strengthen capacity-building for the promotion and protection of the rights of children. China supported the role of the United Nations system in enhancing international cooperation on the rights of children and the constructive participation of civil society in the protection of children's rights. It called on developed countries to continue to provide technical and financial assistance to developing countries. In the next five years, China would help developing countries carry out 100 health projects for women and children and dispatch teams of medical experts on field tours; it would also implement 100 projects to provide financial aid to girls living in poverty in order to improve their school enrolment rate. Her Government would continue to provide assistance to other developing countries within the framework of South-South cooperation.

72. At the national level, China had established special agencies dedicated to children's welfare, and it periodically formulated child-related master plans. It regularly strengthened child-related laws and punished violations severely. It was continually improving health care services for children and spared no effort to ensure that every child had access to education.

73. **Mr. Kahn** (Pakistan) said that, in addition to being a party to the Convention and its first two optional protocols, his country had ratified all the core ILO conventions on child labour and the Convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It had established a national commission for child welfare and development, which worked in close collaboration with UNICEF, and had a comprehensive child protection bill pending in Parliament.

74. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focused attention on meeting the needs of children as a key development priority, while the Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognized the need to support countries facing particular challenges in investing in children. Those successful outcomes were due to the effective advocacy of the Group of Friends for Children and Sustainable Development Goals, established and led by Pakistan.

75. The child-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals complemented some of Pakistan's own development priorities, which included halving infant and maternal mortality, achieving universal

primary school enrolment and completion, boosting overall literacy to 90 per cent and eradicating polio.

76. **Mr. Barkan** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he was stunned by the accusations of the Syrian representative. The Syrian regime had barbarically killed thousands and thousands of its own civilians, including many children, as had been documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

77. Once again, the Palestinian delegation had painted a one-sided, misleading picture, which included outright fabrications. While all the other delegations spoke about what their Governments were doing for their countries' children, the Palestinian delegation constantly complained about Israel and never mentioned what the Palestinians were doing for their children — possibly because they were doing nothing. The wave of terrorism sweeping Israel was due to incitement by elements within the Palestinian Authority as well as groups such as Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Palestinian youth and children were being goaded to commit horrifying murders. He called on the Palestinian people to stop the incitement, save their children and return to the negotiating table. It was the only way to achieve the two-State solution that both sides desired.

78. **Ms. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Israeli delegation consistently avoided addressing Israel's illegal military occupation of Palestine, where countless crimes and human rights violations were being perpetrated against Palestinian children and the entire Palestinian population. Such distortions ignored the reality of the Palestinian people and children living under occupation and their struggle for the realization of their human rights and self-determination. As she spoke, Israel had its boots on Palestinian ground and was using brute force to terrorize children. Palestinian children were being detained, watching their homes being demolished, or prevented from going to school or hospital. Over the previous 13 days alone, Israel, the occupying Power, had murdered more than 33 Palestinian civilians, including at least seven children, one of whom had been only 2 years old. All those blatant violations of international law and international human rights law, many of which amounted to war crimes, were being perpetrated on an ongoing basis.

79. The State of Palestine continued to condemn all killing and violence against children, whether Palestinian or Israeli, and it called on Israel to do the same. There must be justice for the murdered babies, their families and every single family victimized by Israel. The international community had the power to end the occupation, and it should exercise that power, for the sake of Israeli and Palestinian children and future generations. Real peace and stability would come only when the two peoples lived in freedom and security in their own States.

80. The State of Palestine rejected Israel's claim that the recent escalation was a wave of terror resulting from Palestinian incitement. The Palestinian leadership had consistently confirmed that the State of Palestine was pursuing only peaceful and legal means to end the occupation. In contrast, the Israeli occupying authority actively and intentionally incited violence. When the Prime Minister of Israel told his security forces that there were no restrictions on their actions; when the so-called mayor of Jerusalem told its residents that it was their duty to carry guns; when terrorist settlers screamed "Death to Arabs" — that was incitement. No single incident had sparked the surge of violence. For years, the Israeli occupying authority had encouraged a culture of hate and pursued State terrorism against the Palestinians under its illegal occupation with total impunity. The Israeli occupation was the root cause of the bloodshed.

81. **Mr. Barkan** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Palestinian representative's statement represented a sad obfuscation of the facts. He regretted that, once again, she had not mentioned anything positive that the Palestinians were doing for Palestinian children.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.