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**Third Committee****Summary record of the 16th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 16 October 2015, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Dempsey (Vice-Chair) ..... (Canada)  
*later:* Ms. Kupradze (Vice-Chair) ..... (Georgia)

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*In the absence of Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Mr. Dempsey (Canada), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

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

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

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

1. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that his Government had established an interministerial committee, composed of the Ministries of Labour, Justice, Education and Health, to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had also set up subregional child welfare committees. Revisions had been made to the civil and penal codes to criminalize corporal punishment and the beating of children under any circumstances, to allow children to make decisions in custody disputes, and to raise the age of criminal responsibility. Eritrean women's and youth organizations had been involved in the implementation of countrywide awareness-raising programmes to support vulnerable children and in the organization of training and advocacy programmes for youth. A pilot project to reintegrate street children into the education system had recently been launched, and child-to-child media programmes had been introduced to gain insight into children's views on issues that affected them.

2. His Government was continuing to strengthen social and legal protection for children. Legislative measures had been introduced to prohibit the employment of children under the age of 14 and the recruitment of children under the age of 18 to national service or the defence forces. The national plan of action against the sexual exploitation of children was being implemented through preventive and rehabilitation programmes and his Government was working to combat child trafficking through participation in a regional initiative, raising public awareness and ensuring that the perpetrators were brought to justice.

3. Equitable distribution of health care facilities and the implementation of maternal, neonatal and child health care programmes had resulted in the

achievement of Goal 4 of the Millennium Development Goals on reducing child mortality. Moreover, the malaria rate had been reduced by 90 per cent, polio and neonatal tetanus had been eradicated and the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate was now less than 1 per cent. His Government's primary objective in the area of education was to provide free and universal primary schooling. To that end, children were taught in their mother tongue and particular efforts were being made to improve access for girls, children from nomadic communities and children with disabilities.

4. The remaining challenges to be overcome included deep-rooted cultural and religious beliefs associated with female genital mutilation which, though illegal, was still being practised. In addition, poverty, underdevelopment, sanctions and the occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory continued to affect the most vulnerable sectors of society, in particular women and children. To advance the basic rights of Eritrean children, the international community should address the issues of sanctions and occupation as a matter of urgency.

5. **Ms. González López** (El Salvador) said that her country had made significant progress in the areas of children's education and health and had strengthened its legislative and policy framework, in line with the Convention, to ensure comprehensive protection for children and adolescents, who represented nearly 34 per cent of the Salvadorian population. Between June 2014 and May 2015, a total of 15,158 cases of alleged threats or violations had been brought before the 15 municipal child and adolescent protection boards, which had been established to protect the rights of children at the local level. Of those cases, 60 per cent involved the right to bodily integrity, 12 per cent concerned the right to health and another 12 per cent were related to protection against kidnapping and detention. Her country had achieved significant progress since its ratification of the Convention; the percentage of children living in poverty had fallen from nearly 53 per cent in 2009 to 43 per cent in 2013. Nevertheless, her Government recognized that inequalities remained and reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

6. The approach to the complex issue of child and adolescent migrants illegally entering the United States from Central America must be based on human rights, child protection and the best interests of the child, rather than detention and deportation without recourse to appropriate administrative and legal procedures. All

States should work together to ensure respect for children's rights, in particular their right to family reunification, and the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of their immigration status.

7. Her Government had ratified the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in February 2015.

8. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka) said that the 2013 South Asian report on the child-friendliness of Governments had placed his country at the top of the child friendliness index. The Sri Lankan Constitution guaranteed equality for all citizens and made special provision for the advancement of women and children. His Government had introduced legislation to increase protection for those at risk of or affected by domestic violence, including children, and to raise the legal working age from 12 to 14, while enhancing the penalties for violation of that provision. The Sri Lankan Criminal Code specifically covered child trafficking and cybercrimes such as sexual abuse, child pornography and human trafficking involving electronic media, and a dedicated cybercrime unit had been established to identify offenders. However, the problem could not be solved through laws and regulations alone; awareness-raising and education were necessary to ensure that parents and guardians remained vigilant.

9. His Government was committed to respecting its international treaty obligations and would continue to uphold the rights of all Sri Lankan women and girls, irrespective of race or creed. It had established a strong family health care system, as evidenced by its low infant and maternal mortality rates, and primary school enrolment had reached 99 per cent in 2011. It also planned to improve child care standards and develop alternatives to institutional care, in particular in order to meet the needs of children who continued to suffer from the effects of the 30-year conflict and the 2004 tsunami. It fully supported the efforts of the United Nations in the area of children's rights and continued to enjoy a close working relationship with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

10. **Ms. Mohamed Didi** (Maldives) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the international treaty with the largest number of signatories, which demonstrated how highly Member States valued children. Her Government had ratified the Convention in 1991, and was also a party to its two

Optional Protocols; it was fully committed to the realization of the ambitious targets relating to children's rights contained in the 2030 Agenda.

11. Education was a human right and, as such, primarily the responsibility of the State. Her Government was committed to providing all Maldivian children, who comprised 46 per cent of the population, with the best possible education. It had consistently dedicated over 6 per cent of the country's gross domestic product to education and had taken measures to ensure equitable access: education was free up to the higher secondary level and textbooks, stationery and entrance to local and international examinations were also provided at no cost. The country's first university had been established in 2012. As a result of those efforts, universal enrolment in primary education had been achieved and increasing numbers of young people were able to access secondary and higher education. The promotion of girls was a key element of the Maldivian development strategy. Gender parity had been achieved in literacy and enrolment rates at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels across the country, and in recent years girls had surpassed boys in both graduation rates and levels of achievement at all levels of education. However, the rise of religious conservatism and ideological views which narrowly defined gender roles had led to such trends as non-vaccination of infants, child marriage and restrictions on girls' access to formal education and health care services. Education and the empowerment of children and youth would therefore continue to be priorities for her Government. New laws on the prosecution of sexual offenders, domestic violence, sexual harassment and abuse and sexual offences had been introduced in order to better protect women, children and migrants. A gender equality law was also in the final stages of development.

12. The shared responsibility of all Member States to provide a safe and secure environment for the world's children must include addressing the effects of climate change, which threatened to undermine children's rights to health, education and an adequate standard of living.

13. **Mr. Thammavongsa** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that in recent years, his Government had strengthened the legal framework for the protection of women and children from all forms of violence, including domestic violence, through the introduction of laws on juvenile criminal justice and violence against women and children. It had also developed a

national action plan on the prevention and elimination of violence against children for the period 2014-2020. Additionally, the proportion of the budget allocated to children's health and education had been increased, a nutrition strategy had been adopted and vaccination campaigns had been carried out across the country. A pilot project aimed at promoting school attendance in rural and remote areas through the provision of free lunches had been successful and would be expanded to other areas of the country. At the regional level, his country had been particularly active in the work of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and attached great importance to the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence Against Children adopted in 2013.

14. There were still challenges to be overcome, particularly in rural and remote areas of the country, where poverty levels remained high and health care services were insufficient. His Government would do its utmost to ensure that all children in the country were able to fully enjoy their rights. The support of development partners, international organizations and United Nations development agencies would continue to be invaluable in that regard.

15. **Ms. Soulama** (Burkina Faso) said that her Government had made significant advances in the area of children's rights in her country, where children under the age of 18 made up 53 per cent of the population. It had ratified various international and regional legal instruments, including the Convention and its two Optional Protocols, as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and had developed a strategic framework for the period 2008-2017 to facilitate the implementation of its international commitments. It had also established a national children's rights observatory and a national children's council and juvenile courts, and had developed child-focused health, education and social protection policies. The introduction of compulsory birth registration, the identification of children with disabilities, the harmonization of child protection indicators and data collection mechanisms, the introduction of a free child violence hotline and increased school attendance by girls were contributing to the protection of children from various forms of violence.

16. In the sphere of education, teachers received training on children's rights, and over 83 per cent of girls were attending school as of 2014. A national strategy to prevent early pregnancy was being developed, and a new initiative to provide support for adolescents at risk of early marriage had been launched in 2015 to supplement efforts to combat that practice that had been underway since 2011. Her Government's efforts to address female genital mutilation had resulted in a positive change in thinking and behaviour, and a toll-free number had been established to enable members of the public to alert the authorities of any violations. Challenges remained to the implementation of the national children's rights policy, however, including inadequate dissemination of the content of legislative and regulatory texts, insufficient financial resources and weak coordination between the various actors.

17. Despite the progress that had been made in recent years, many children still suffered daily violations of their fundamental rights, in times of peace as well as in times of war. Governments bore the primary responsibility for ensuring that children were able to develop in a healthy and secure environment and must therefore allocate the necessary resources to the national and international bodies responsible for the protection and promotion of children's rights.

18. **Ms. Cedeño Rengifo** (Panama) said that early childhood had become a focus area in Latin American development work, as efforts aimed at young children could establish a foundation for overcoming the challenges of poverty, inequality and social exclusion and were thus a highly profitable investment. Her Government's efforts in that regard covered the areas of health, education and social development. The growth, development and health of children up to 6 years of age was monitored, and women received prenatal and post-partum check-ups and a maternity allowance. Dedicated infant and family centres provided protection and comprehensive care for young children from birth to 5 years of age. Early childhood education was available for four- and five-year-olds across the country, while nursery-level care was organized at the municipal level in line with guidance from the Ministries of Education and of Social Development.

19. In 2015, the legal marriage age in Panama had been raised to 18, in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee

on the Rights of the Child. The number of child labourers had been reduced by about 23,000, in large part owing to the provision of high-quality education and sports programmes as well as awareness-raising campaigns on the negative effects of child labour. The Ministry of Social Development was spearheading efforts to develop a road map for the formulation of a law on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents. Her Government reiterated its commitment to the implementation of the Convention. Ensuring children's rights must go beyond meeting their immediate needs and take into account their role as adults, whose contribution would be vital to the achievement of sustainable development.

20. **Ms. Mayao** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her Government was committed to the implementation of the Convention, its two Optional Protocols, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as the goals of the World Summit for Children. Tanzanian national development and poverty reduction strategies incorporated children's issues, as her Government recognized that problems affecting children were linked to the general socioeconomic situation. Specific efforts had also been made to consolidate and enhance the legal framework to protect children from neglect, discrimination, violence and abuse.

21. Her Government had achieved gender parity and near universality of primary education, and the establishment of new secondary schools had also increased enrolment at that level. Vaccination campaigns, improved nutrition and distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets had significantly reduced neonatal, under-five and maternal mortality rates. In order to address the persistently low levels of birth registration, a national campaign was underway to register children under the age of 5 and a system had been introduced to enable health workers to register babies by mobile telephone. Her Government's efforts to end child marriage included raising the age of majority to 18 and increasing girls' access to education. It had taken a holistic approach to the elimination of violence against and killing of children with albinism, which included awareness-raising efforts and a review of the legislation on witchcraft and traditional and alternative medicine.

22. The promotion and protection of the rights of children required the concerted efforts of Governments, the international community, the private

sector and civil society. While Governments bore the primary responsibility towards their citizens, international cooperation was necessary to supplement national efforts.

23. **Ms. Lwin** (Myanmar) said that her Government had signed the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict in September 2015 and was working to end the recruitment and use of underage soldiers. It supported the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. Since the signature of the joint action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the armed forces of Myanmar (Tatmadaw) by her Government and the United Nations in 2012, the armed forces has discharged over 600 underage recruits, and 56 officers and 283 lower-ranking members of the military had been held accountable for their part in the recruitment of children. Age verification was now carried out on the basis of five types of documents, interviews with parents or guardians and the examination of wrist x-rays. It was unfortunate that the reports on children and armed conflict did not reflect the true situation in Myanmar: the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict ([A/69/929-S/2015/409](#)) had been issued in June 2015, even though the country task force had not yet finalized its progress report on Myanmar for the period June to December 2014. Thus, efforts to address challenges and criticisms had not been fully reported, and the report contained misleading allegations. At the invitation of her Government, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had visited the country in July 2015. That visit had been instrumental in making progress towards the goal of zero underage recruitment, which her Government hoped to achieve by 2016. The Tatmadaw should therefore be removed from the list annexed to the annual report of the Secretary General in the near future.

24. Her Government had reduced infant and under-five mortality rates by half. As a result of the introduction of free primary education in 2008 and a national campaign the following year, 98 per cent of five-year-olds were now enrolled in school. Free education had been provided at the lower secondary level since 2014 and would soon be expanded to cover the entire secondary level. At the regional level, her Government was working with other ASEAN States to implement the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of

Violence Against Children and would continue to work with regional and international partners to protect children from disease, violence and natural and man-made disasters and to provide the high-quality education, social and health care services that would empower children to reach their full potential.

25. **Ms. Hallsdottir** (Iceland) said that the States Members of the United Nations had the power to change the future of millions of children for the better. The lack of access to education for millions of children in conflict areas, such as the Syrian Arab Republic, was unacceptable. Over the next 15 months, Iceland would provide 14 million euros to support refugees and asylum seekers from the Syrian Arab Republic. The support would be channelled through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF and other international organizations.

26. A systematic focus on the girl child's participation in education was needed, given that gender remained one of the main factors of discrimination in access to education. Being female and poor was a double disadvantage in many countries, as poverty was an additional impediment to education; conversely, an investment in educating girls, who would later educate and serve as role models for their own children, would help societies thrive. In order to attain the target of universal completion of quality primary and secondary education by girls and boys, set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States must address collectively the challenges faced by children, on whom the world's future depended.

27. **Ms. Bowoleksono** (Indonesia) said that children were at the centre of Indonesia's medium- and long-term development plans, which provided for improving access to health care and education and enhancing the quality of education. Her Government allocated over 20 per cent of the annual budget to education and had increased the number of years of compulsory education to 12. Moreover, public spending on fuel subsidies had been reduced in order to increase the funding available for social development programmes to improve access to health care and education. Clear milestones to reduce violence against children had been set in the 2015-2019 medium-term national development plan, including strengthening child protection institutions and raising awareness on children's rights among parents and communities. Indonesia was continuing to

strengthen legislation covering education, health, family development, civil rights and the protection of children from all forms of violence.

28. A new strategy for 2016-2020 to prevent violence against children aimed to, inter alia, strengthen the alignment of laws and policies with the Convention; adopt or replicate successful programmes initiated locally at the national level; increase public advocacy for children's rights; intensify data collection and mapping of problems throughout the country; integrate children's rights into all development programmes and policies; develop a harmonized plan that would avoid waste and overlap; and mobilize greater support from all stakeholders. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission was developing a website for documenting and monitoring cases of violence against children and was setting up a cyberbullying protection mechanism for children.

29. **Mr. Cheong Loon Lai** (Malaysia) said that Malaysia would do its part to mobilize all stakeholders on emerging issues identified in the Sustainable Development Goals. His Government valued its strong partnership with UNICEF and earlier in 2015 it had hosted the UNICEF Executive Board on a week-long visit to evaluate the implementation of the UNICEF country programme. Including children in the development process was a priority for his Government, along with the private sector as a strategic partner. The latter's support constituted an investment in developing human capital, which would, in turn, yield a competitive workforce and a sustainable economy.

30. The lack of strong accountability mechanisms for violations committed against children contributed to persistent impunity in that regard, hence the need for further discussion on establishing such mechanisms. Children continued to bear the brunt of armed conflict. Bridging accountability gaps would require a strong collective effort from all actors, including Member States, the United Nations system and civil society. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council and as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Malaysia stood ready to advance the issue of accountability.

31. **Ms. Klein** (Madagascar) said that her Government had put in place an institutional framework to coordinate activities in the area of child protection. Efforts to combat trafficking in persons had

been redoubled, with a special focus on women and children, and several measures had been taken with a view to preventing child marriage, sexual exploitation of children and sex tourism. Child protection networks, a toll-free hotline for children, and local centres offering legal counselling had been established. Her Government had also set minimum standards for the care of children deprived of parental care, and made provision for the care of child victims of emergencies and disasters.

32. Her Government had taken steps to achieve universal education, including enacting legislation that guaranteed access to education free of charge, and was conducting awareness-raising campaigns on the enrolment of school-age children. A project to support the Education for All programme targeted access to primary education and school retention as well as the improvement of vocational education. Her Government's cooperation with United Nations agencies, in particular UNICEF, extended to such areas as water, sanitation, health and nutrition. Significant progress had been achieved in combating malaria. Over the next few years her Government would be stepping up its efforts in the areas of vaccination and treatment of childhood diseases, malnutrition and anaemia, and would undertake campaigns to eradicate maternal tetanus, polio and measles in the context of its fight against infant and child morbidity and mortality.

33. **Ms. Kupradze** (Georgia) said that her Government reiterated its commitment to ensuring the effective exercise of the rights of children and looked forward to the upcoming visit of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2016. It was a party to the main international instruments on the rights of the child and in 2015 had ratified the 1996 Hague Convention on Parental Responsibility and Protection of Children as well as the 2007 Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. At the national level, with the adoption of the National Human Rights Strategy for 2014-2020, it had committed itself to further upgrading the education system, developing health care and social services, reducing poverty and child mortality and ensuring the effective protection of children from violence.

34. Despite the progress achieved towards bringing domestic legislation into line with international human rights standards, her Government had been deprived of the opportunity to address the humanitarian needs of

children living in the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions, which remained under illegal Russian military occupation. The fundamental human rights of those children were being violated on a daily basis, in the absence of international monitoring mechanisms inside those territories. The occupation regime's deliberate and illegitimate "Russification" policy prevented Georgian children from exercising their right to education in their native language, imposing a Russian curriculum and changing the language of instruction from Georgian to Russian in primary schools. In secondary schools, Georgian language instruction had decreased and Georgian history and geography had been removed from the curriculum. In addition, severe restrictions had been imposed on freedom of movement across the occupation line, and so-called "border" signs had been installed, expanding the occupation area deeper into the territory controlled by Georgia. Most alarmingly, such restrictions extended even to children in need of urgent medical assistance, in blatant violation of the internationally recognized right to health care. Georgia stood ready to contribute to international efforts to alleviate the consequences of armed hostilities and safeguard the rights of children both in peacetime and during armed conflict.

35. **Mr. Giacomelli da Silva** (Brazil) said that Brazil welcomed the numerous references to children in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and attached particular importance to ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. The Brazilian code on children and adolescents of 1990 had been amended to prohibit all corporal punishment of children. His country had hosted the twenty-first Pan-American Child and Adolescent Congress of the Organization of American States in November 2014, in which children and adolescents from the region had participated.

36. Violence against children must be combated as a multidimensional phenomenon. Bullying, in particular, had a range of negative effects on victims. Promoting positive social norms that welcomed cultural diversity was a critical step in acknowledging and protecting the rights of children, hence the need to foster a culture of tolerance and non-discrimination from an early age, provide comprehensive sexuality education and instil notions of gender equality.

37. On the issue of child labour, he highlighted the Brasilia Declaration on Child Labour, in which States

had agreed to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

38. With the number of children separated from their families due to conflict, migration or extreme poverty — and thus at higher risk of exploitation, abuse and other violations — on the rise, States must comply fully with their obligations under the Convention regardless of a child's migratory status or that of his or her family. General Assembly resolution 64/142 provided a coherent policy framework in support of children deprived of parental care. His delegation stressed the role of sports in the promotion of children's physical, mental and emotional health, in realization of the child's right to engage in play and recreational activities; as hosts of the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Brazil expected that they would leave a lasting legacy of promoting physical activity among children.

39. **Ms. Bernadel** (Haiti) said that, with the support of UNICEF and other partners, the Ministry of Education had made significant progress in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. A national policy framework for early childhood development had been introduced in 2012 and, despite overwhelming difficulties, including natural disasters and political and social problems, her Government had made progress in strengthening the institutional framework and was striving to tackle continuing challenges in early childhood care. Her Government was striving to ensure free education for all children. Efforts in that regard included the development of accelerated vocational programmes for older children and improvement of literacy, the establishment of a national early childhood strategy as well as the strengthening of Government capacity in risk and disaster management. With the assistance of its many partners, national, bilateral and multilateral, civil society and non-governmental organizations, Haiti hoped to achieve the objective of education for all, and would continue to accord it priority. The Ministry of Education was focused on improving the quality of education, including training better teachers, providing school supplies for children, and monitoring their progress. The President had asserted the importance of quality education during an event in which motorbikes had been distributed with a view to facilitating the transportation of children to schools.

40. Good health was essential to a child's ability to benefit from education. In that vein, she thanked Haiti's partners, including the World Health Organization/Pan

American Health Organization, UNICEF, and the United Nations Population Fund, which had supported a 2013-2015 Ministry of Health vaccination campaign to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus. In addition, the President, with the support of the First Lady, had launched a comprehensive national strategy to halve the number of those suffering from hunger by the end of 2016, and to eradicate hunger and malnutrition by 2025. To ensure success, the most vulnerable households would be targeted, using a vulnerability measurement methodology developed by the World Bank. Haiti was committed to the eradication of extreme poverty and sustainable economic development for all.

41. *Ms. Kupradze (Georgia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

42. **Mr. Nina** (Albania) said that his Government welcomed the inclusion of the issue of child protection within the Sustainable Development Goals, including the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and of the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Albania was deeply concerned by the atrocities perpetrated by extremist non-State armed groups, in particular against children who belonged to religious and ethnic minorities. The unprecedented mixture of barbarism and modern propaganda used by such entities as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and its affiliates, including such acts as beheadings and rape, was deeply disturbing, and their focus on the recruitment of children would create a new generation of terrorists. In that context, Albania welcomed the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and actively supported the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. It also welcomed the ruling of the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court in December 2014 against the first individual to be convicted of war crimes consisting of the recruitment of children, which represented a milestone in ensuring accountability and ending impunity.

43. Albania had acceded to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It welcomed recent ratifications of the Optional Protocol on a communications which would ensure that children gained much-needed access to international justice.

44. Albania's State child protection agency was monitoring the implementation of the legal framework for the protection of the rights of the child and the promotion of inter-institutional coordination in that



regard. In response to a 2014 report by the agency which had revealed that fiscal constraints had led to reduced spending on child welfare by local governments, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth had conducted an analysis of the child protection system, and had issued budgetary recommendations for child protection services at the central and local levels. The agency was currently implementing a project to promote the protection of children's rights through increased public investment in children's welfare.

45. **Ms. Saran** (South Africa) expressed concern about the continued sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. New approaches were needed; the international community should develop and implement sustainable and context-specific strategies while also raising awareness within communities. As the sale of children could be a transnational crime, international cooperation was essential. South Africa had developed a framework for the care and protection of children. The Children's Act provided guidelines for prevention, early intervention, statutory services, reunification and after-care services for South African children within and outside the country's borders. Her Government had recently adopted immigration laws with stringent requirements for persons travelling with children through South Africa's ports of entry. Those regulations were expected to help minimize child trafficking within and through the country.

46. **Mr. Valli** (Monaco) said that in the context of one of the greatest migratory crises in history, the international community should actively combat human trafficking, which was claiming an increasing number of child victims. Monaco attached great importance to joint efforts to combat that scourge, in particular by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Organization for Migration and the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons. Since 2007, Monaco had supported OSCE programmes intended to combat and prevent the trafficking of children, and had just begun the ratification process of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. His Government was also working with civil society to implement campaigns intended to promote the safe use of information and communications technologies by children and the protection of children from violence online.

47. With a view to stemming preventable deaths among children under age five, his Government had invested in specific international projects for the protection of the health of disadvantaged women and children, mainly from the least developed countries. At the national level, given the need for access to quality education, his Government had consistently endeavoured to strengthen the national education system, including by strengthening human-rights and citizenship education, and had adopted a law on the education of children with disabilities.

48. **Mr. González de Linares Palou** (Spain) said that his Government had ratified the Convention and its three Optional Protocols. Recent legislative reforms had improved the system for the protection of children and adolescents, in line with the general recommendations and observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Those reforms included the mandatory inclusion of a childhood and adolescence impact analysis in all draft legislation and regulations; strengthening of the principle of the best interests of the child; protection of the rights of minors in court proceedings; reform of the child welfare system to promote placement in families rather than in residential settings; special protection of the most vulnerable children, such as child trafficking victims, disabled or unaccompanied migrant children, and the entitlement of migrant children to the same social services as Spanish children; prevention of violence against children, as a cross-cutting principle in all administrative proceedings, including awareness-raising and explicit prohibition of corporal punishment; stronger protection against crimes of a sexual nature against children, through a requirement for individuals and authorities to report such crimes, and prohibition of the employment of convicted child molesters in work with children; and provisions to meet the challenges posed by information and communications technologies and social media, including improved computer literacy and media self-regulation. Lastly, in situations of gender violence, children were now considered as direct victims, strengthening their protection under the new statute on crime victims which, inter alia, sought to prevent revictimization. Accordingly, the public authorities now had much more effective instruments for ensuring the social and legal protection of children.

49. **Mr. Zinsou** (Benin) said that his country had undertaken sustained efforts to protect the rights of children in compliance with its commitments under the Convention. His Government had implemented a

variety of legislative, regulatory and administrative measures, including laws on female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and child trafficking, as well as a family code. A national policy on the protection of children had been formulated in October 2014, and a children's code had been adopted in January 2015.

50. Article 13 of the national Constitution provided for compulsory public primary education and, over the past 10 years, measures had been taken with regard to school fees, resulting in increased enrolment. More work, however, remained to be done in terms of improving conditions for children in schools. National institutions encouraged the promotion and protection of the rights of the child while taking into account cultural realities, which required an approach which varied from region to region, in order to promote the country's integrated and inclusive development. A legal arsenal in itself was not sufficient to protect the rights of children; the implementation of concrete measures was just as important. Accordingly, his Government was mobilizing all stakeholders, and requested increased support from the international community for national efforts.

51. **Ms. Al-Rowaiei** (Bahrain) said that the attention given to childhood was a vital indicator of progress towards development and social advancement. A party to the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, Bahrain had also adopted the Declaration of Alma-Ata on primary health care, which it provided free of charge, guaranteeing preventive and palliative care pertaining to maternal, child and family health.

52. Under Bahraini law, education was compulsory and free of charge for all children. Curricula were updated regularly with a view to ensuring quality, and there were a number of day-care centres and private schools.

53. A national centre for child protection had been established, along with the Betelco Child Welfare Home. Both institutions endeavoured to protect children, including orphans and children from broken homes, from all forms of mistreatment and neglect. A hotline had been created for children to report child endangerment. In addition, a programme had been established to provide alternative care for children whose parents were unable to care for them.

54. In order to facilitate youth recreation, several educational and sport facilities had been created under

the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and the Ministry of Youth and Sport. In 2001, the Royal Charity Organization had been established to care for orphans, widows and others in need at home and abroad, particularly in conflict- and disaster-stricken areas. Schools were being built in refugee camps in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Gaza Strip, and assistance was being extended to populations in Djibouti, Nepal and Yemen. Her Government hoped to share its experience in the area of advancing children's rights with interested States.

55. **Ms. Rahimova** (Azerbaijan) said that her Government was a party to the Convention and two of its Optional Protocols and had also ratified the International Labour Organization conventions dealing with child labour, as well as the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption. Her Government had worked to bring national legislation in line with the provisions of the Convention and other relevant instruments, and its enforcement had been strengthened through the introduction of State monitoring of the implementation of the rights of the child. A programme for the deinstitutionalization of children living in State institutions had been launched, and an E-data bank on the implementation of children's rights had also been created.

56. Under the Education Act, all children had the right to general secondary education, which was free of charge at all public educational institutions. A national children's strategy and child code were in the development phase. In addition, her Government had recently launched projects intended to draw attention to family values and the care of children with restricted abilities, as well as the need to combat early marriage and domestic violence.

57. Her Government was deeply concerned by the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on children, and child casualties. Azerbaijan had consistently demanded that parties to armed conflict strictly comply with international humanitarian and human rights law obligations in all circumstances. Children, in times of conflict, should be afforded international protection, which must be free of selectivity. Thousands of Azerbaijani children had been deprived of their basic rights, killed and maimed for reasons of ethnic hatred during the aggression perpetrated by Armenia against Azerbaijan. Many children had been taken hostage or otherwise forcibly displaced from their homes. Armenia

continued to deny those children the right to return to their homes, which jeopardized attempts to achieve lasting peace. Despite the continued efforts of her Government and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the fate of many missing children and their families remained unknown. More than 20 years after the ceasefire agreement had been signed, Azerbaijani civilians and facilities were still being subjected to targeted and indiscriminate attacks by the Armenian armed forces. The root causes of armed conflict should be addressed to put an end to the plight of civilians, including children, all over the world. To that end, all parties to armed conflict and the international community should redouble their efforts to resolve conflicts, both ongoing and protracted. Azerbaijan was fully committed to that objective.

58. **Mr. Sargsyan** (Armenia) said that his delegation was encouraged by the inclusion of a wide spectrum of child-specific targets in the Sustainable Development Goals. Strengthened national laws, policies and programmes that incorporated the rights and needs of children through evidence-based policy advocacy would allow for the realization of the Goals. Armenia was implementing a number of measures, including State programmes on education development and on the protection of child rights, and the National Plan of Action on Human Rights Protection, launched in 2014, included a dedicated chapter on the rights of the child. The drafting and implementation of the relevant legislation had involved a variety of stakeholders, including civil society and child advocacy groups, the private sector and international partners, including UNICEF. Armenia's new country programme document for the period 2016-2020 focused on greater investment in intersectoral cooperation to address the issues of children facing multiple deprivations, and clearly articulated a joint commitment to focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized children and families. In cooperation with its partners, Armenia intended to explore the engagement of the private sector in corporate social responsibility, as well as to attract the support of diaspora networks for reforms relating to children's rights. Capitalizing on successful projects, his Government was continuing to expand its outreach to young innovators and social entrepreneurs in order to improve access to quality education, tackle financial illiteracy and broaden the engagement of young people in creating development solutions.

59. Armenia was deeply concerned by and was closely following the developments of the ongoing refugee crisis and its impact on children. As a nation which was continuing to suffer the serious consequences of the aggression and illegal blockade perpetrated by Azerbaijan, Armenia condemned all violations of domestic and international law committed against children, whether in times of peace or conflict. The international community should redouble its efforts to combat all forms of violence against children, including abduction, enslavement, sexual exploitation and recruitment, and must ensure that perpetrators were held accountable. The international community should also examine the impact of unilaterally imposed blockades on the enjoyment of human rights by the affected populations, in particular their socioeconomic impact on children.

60. With the recent influx from the Syrian Arab Republic of 17,000 refugees, many of whom were children, his Government was sparing no effort to meet their urgent needs. It had been implementing a comprehensive action plan since 2013. That new wave of displacement had compounded similar challenges already faced by Armenia, which had hosted and integrated hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees from Azerbaijan, and over 1,000 displaced persons from Iraq. Despite those challenges, Armenia was committed to expanding its partnership with all stakeholders in order to deliver the greatest benefits and results to children and make the world free from violence against children, at both the national and international levels.

61. **Ms. Alfeine** (Comoros) said that the situation of children remained very worrying in several regions of the world, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, despite progress achieved through the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The issue of children living in poverty must be considered in a social context, taking into account family composition, distribution of resources, the status of women and the number of children in a household.

62. As more than 65 per cent of the population of the Comoros was under age 25, the situation of children and young parents was a matter of particular concern to her Government. Accordingly, it was endeavouring to implement the provisions of the Convention and of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. It had formulated a strategy document for the integral development of the young child, aimed both at

decision-makers and at children and families as actors and beneficiaries. In the area of health and education, with technical support from UNICEF and the financial commitment of development partners, her Government had prioritized the reduction of maternal, child and infant mortality rates, deaths related to communicable diseases and acute malnutrition in children under age 5. A national programme to combat HIV/AIDS had been established with a view to keeping the prevalence rate at below 1 per cent, including a hotline which had been available since March 2009. Free access to antiretroviral medications was guaranteed.

63. Her Government ensured free primary school education, and the enrolment rate, currently at over 80 per cent, had been steadily increasing since 2008. It had also developed a national strategy to protect vulnerable children, which included the establishment of children's courts and child welfare services for victims of abuse and mistreatment. Three hotlines had been set up to serve children who had suffered abuse on the three islands under Comorian administration. On the island of Mayotte, more than 7,000 children were living without parents, as their parents had been deported.

64. Her Government's efforts were hindered by significant financial constraints. It encouraged development partners to assist her country in its efforts to protect the interests of its children.

65. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that during the negotiations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, his country had strongly advocated that children's human rights should be integrated into all aspects of development.. Bulgaria had also participated actively in the UNICEF global initiative the "World's Largest Lesson", aimed at teaching children about the Sustainable Development Goals. Over 17,000 Bulgarian students had taken part in that initiative, designed to teach children about the Sustainable Development Goals and encourage them to drive real change in their own lives.

66. The current mass migration was a major humanitarian crisis of an unprecedented scale and nature and required immediate action through a coherent and comprehensive international response. Children were particularly vulnerable and countries had a moral duty and responsibility to relieve their plight. As a transit and a host country for thousands of migrants and refugees, Bulgaria was making every

effort, in cooperation with the European Union, UNICEF and other partners, to meet the needs of migrant children, especially unaccompanied children, through the provision of essential services such as food, health care and education.

67. His Government had undertaken sustained and coordinated measures for promoting the human rights and well-being of all children. Special attention was paid to the social inclusion of children and protecting the right of every child to grow up in a family environment through various targeted policies aimed at encouraging good parenting and supporting families with children, promoting innovative integrated services for early childhood development and ensuring better access to childcare centres, quality education and advanced health care services for small children. Significant progress had been made in deinstitutionalization, including by implementing measures to prevent child abandonment and by providing foster care and social services in the community. His Government also attached importance to promoting inclusive education and was taking the measures necessary to ensure equal access to quality education for all, including children and young people with special needs.

68. Ending violence against children was crucial to protecting children's rights. His Government was working with UNICEF, the media and other partners on a number of social campaigns to raise awareness of the scope of the problem and to bring the perpetrators to justice. In March 2015 UNICEF Bulgaria had launched a campaign to promote children's participation and the inclusion of children of different ages, social status and ethnic background in processes that affected them. A direct online consultation with children had been carried out on topics including education, health care, social security and violence, and the results of that consultation would be taken into account by Bulgarian national authorities when updating the national strategy on children.

69. **Ms. Pérez Gómez** (Colombia) said that her Government was following up the observations and recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child after its consideration of Colombia's fifth and sixth periodic reports in January 2015.. An intersectoral commission on early childhood had been established to implement the national strategy on realizing the rights of children between birth and 5 years of age. Progress had been made in child

nutrition, the reduction of infant mortality and vaccination coverage, which now exceeded 95 per cent; there had also been improvements in health care for expectant mothers. Furthermore, in line with a recommendation by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Colombia had established a unified system of data about children which included 53 indicators of effective enjoyment of rights. Recognition of children as subjects of law, and rejection of any act which could violate those rights, including domestic violence, emotional and physical maltreatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, child labour, and the use of children by criminal groups, were priorities for Colombia. Her Government was also promoting the active participation of children in discussions and mechanisms to move towards peace and reconciliation.

70. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda would require greater investment in childhood and adolescence. Investment focused on children, particularly the most vulnerable, was essential to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and achieving more equitable, less violent and more prosperous societies with greater social mobility, and was also an imperative for the effective use of development resources. Public policies that affected youth and adolescent development must be formulated and implemented in an integral manner.

71. The sexual and reproductive rights of young people must be recognized and guaranteed, and young people must be allowed to take decisions freely and without discrimination. Their access to sexual and reproductive health services, including sexual education, was essential to ensure safe motherhood, prevent unwanted pregnancies, and prevent and treat sexually transmitted diseases.

72. The fight against bullying must be a priority for Governments, as bullying had significant consequences for the health, emotional well-being and academic success of students. Countries which guaranteed the human rights of their children would be able to move beyond conflict and achieve reconciliation, for the benefit of future generations.

73. **Mr. Mwanza** (Zambia) said that his country was committed to the protection and promotion of children's rights as enshrined in the Convention, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other human rights instruments. It would endeavour to invest in human and financial resources

to ensure attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and, recognizing the State's duty to ensure that children became responsible citizens, it had prioritized domestic implementation of human rights conventions and treaties. It had recently developed policies and legislation including a revised child policy, of 2015, an act to prohibit gender-based violence, and the Education Act of 2014. It was currently working on a marriage bill which would provide comprehensive protection of the rights of children and was working on a new children's code. It had enhanced advocacy and sensitization about children's rights, especially in rural communities, with the involvement of key players such as traditional, civic and religious leaders, parliamentarians and children themselves.

74. States must give children the opportunity to participate in matters pertaining to their rights and needs. In that regard, Zambia had been implementing programmes to ensure that all children had access to free basic health care and education. Furthermore, his Government had developed and reviewed legislation on topics including gender-based violence, education and the family to enhance the promotion and protection of children and adolescents.

75. Early marriages perpetuated poverty in communities and posed serious risks to girls' health; his Government was hosting the first ever Girl's Summit with the African Union in November 2015 with a view to sharing experiences and practical measures in ending child marriage.

76. Zambia was working with partners to implement programmes for vulnerable children, including a social transfer programme targeting incapacitated households. Despite the progress made, poverty continued to pose a challenge. The HIV/AIDS pandemic had had a negative impact on children; child labour was common in rural and peri-urban areas; and young girls were often forced into early marriages to support their families. In that regard, more assistance from the international community was needed to enhance efforts to protect the rights of children in Zambia.

77. **Mr. Dzonzi** (Malawi) said that his country was a party to the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages and had recently enacted a law that raised the minimum age for marriage from 16 to 18 years of age. That law sought to end the early and forced marriage of girls and ensure that marriage was entered

into only with the informed, free and full consent of the parties.

78. As a result of HIV/AIDS, Malawi had a population of over 1.8 million orphans, some of whom lived in child-headed households. The epidemic had overwhelmed family capacities and social safety nets. Within Malawi's national poverty eradication programmes and its family and community-based mechanisms, foster family arrangements had been made to provide child-headed households with material support, supervision and regular visits. HIV/AIDS was part of the core curriculum in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions and, through in-service and pre-service training, teachers were trained to teach life skills curricula.

79. Malawi was concerned by the increasing availability of pornographic materials in the form of magazines, films and images on the Internet. Children must be protected from exposure to pornography, which could lead to addiction, desensitization and sexual misconduct.

80. Malawi continued to receive numerous refugees and asylum seekers, most of whom were children, from areas of conflict in Africa. It was very clear that responses to security threats in conflict zones posed child protection challenges. His Government called on the international community to increase the response capacity for the protection of children and reduce the loss of life.

81. Malawi's celebrations for the International Day of the Girl Child 2015 had provided an opportunity to increase awareness of the inequalities faced by girls nationally and globally and a platform for girls to show leadership and develop their potential. Boys had signed the HeForShe pledge during the celebrations.

82. **Mr. Beleffi** (San Marino) said that his country and had been striving to integrate the general principles of the Convention and its Optional Protocols in its legal framework and in its policies and programmes. San Marino strongly supported the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those relating to children's rights. His Government had always paid special attention to the most vulnerable groups, such as women, children, older persons and the disabled. It had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and over 40 years earlier, San Marino had started a

programme aimed at integrating all children with disabilities in regular schools.

83. Children were the most vulnerable population group and were subject to violence, abuse and exploitation; a huge number of children all over the world did not have access to basic services, health care and education. San Marino was deeply concerned about the impact of the current refugee crisis on children. The United Nations had a duty to protect children; his Government welcomed the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children in that regard.

84. **Ms. Pajević** (Montenegro) said that her Government attached priority to making real improvements in the lives of children. Equal opportunities for all children, including access to education for children with disabilities, were part of her Government's agenda; efforts were being made to change public attitudes and national infrastructure, and legislation and policies were constantly being strengthened in line with the Convention and with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

85. As strong families were the best environment for the protection and development of children, her Government had launched an awareness-raising campaign, with technical assistance from UNICEF and UNDP and with funding from the European Union, which had led to an increase in the number of foster families and a 200 per cent increase in the number of children in foster homes.

86. Another campaign supported by UNICEF had contributed to changing attitudes and practices towards children with disabilities. The number of parents who found it acceptable for a child with a disability to attend the same class as their own child had risen to 78 per cent in January 2015. The number of children with disabilities enrolled in mainstream education had increased fivefold between 2010 and 2015. The campaign was being recommended to other countries in the region.

87. In the area of juvenile justice, Montenegro was recognized as a regional leader in applying victim-offender mediation in cases involving juveniles. It had become apparent, however, that further attention needed to be paid to work with at-risk families and to

the rights of children participating in civil and administrative proceedings.

88. Since many States had a predominately young population, it was a demographic and democratic imperative to treat children as a vital asset for society and to provide youth with the right educational tools for crisis prevention and peacebuilding. Montenegro was committed to better including young people in mainstream decision-making and reducing their political and social marginalization. Her Government was fully aware of the value of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship among young people and, through the education system, young people were taught to think creatively and critically, cooperate, communicate and take risks. The implementation of programmes and projects, including the “Youth Empowerment” programme being implemented in cooperation with UNDP, encouraged the self-confidence and ambition of young people in a rapidly changing global environment and promoted tolerance among young people.

89. **Ms. AlHussaini** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait’s commitment to providing a quality education for all was enshrined in the country’s Constitution. Primary, secondary and tertiary education were guaranteed and free of charge. Regional cooperation was necessary to protect children from violence, exploitation and recruitment in armed conflict. Countries must uphold their commitment to refrain from using children as soldiers and take appropriate steps to reintegrate them into society. Political, financial and technical support must be provided for reintegration programmes, upholding children’s right to education and health and protecting hospitals and schools from attacks. To complement efforts to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Kuwait had recently enacted legislation on family courts and child protection. In closing, her delegation expressed concern at the suffering to which children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were being subjected by the Israeli occupation forces on a daily basis.

*The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.*