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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 14th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Penke . . . . . (Latvia)

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

**Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (*continued*) (A/64/315)

**(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (*continued*) (A/64/172, A/64/254 and A/64/182-E/2009/110)

**(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children** (*continued*) (A/64/285)

1. **Mr. Bart** (Saint Kitts and Nevis), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the people of the Caribbean region, who were its greatest resource, had been fighting for decades for freedom, justice and peace; CARICOM was therefore all the more determined to promote better standards of living for children. Accordingly, CARICOM fully supported the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by nearly all the States Members of the Organization.

2. However, for the aims of the Convention to be fully achieved, it was necessary to provide children with legal protection, invest more in prenatal and post-natal care and ensure quality education for infants; those were all factors that determined their future. Moreover, since a good start in life also depended on a favourable family environment, the international community should redouble its efforts to protect and promote family rights.

3. In several CARICOM States, free health care was available in clinics and public hospitals, the infant mortality rate was decreasing while the immunization rate was rising, and measures were taken to prevent mother-to-child HIV/AIDS transmission and to help infected children to live with the virus. Regional plans and programmes had also been implemented to enhance infant health care and education, particularly for those at greatest risk and without access to formal education, under the Roving Caregivers Programme and the 1997 Plan of Action for Early Childhood Education, Care and Development.

4. On the whole, the CARICOM countries had achieved universal primary education and had set themselves the same goal for secondary education. In view of the current demand for skilled and specialized labour, they were striving to make the necessary investments to improve the quality of education.

5. Recalling the main points of the Secretary-General's report on the girl child (A/64/315), he said that CARICOM associated itself with the effort to combat all forms of discrimination against women, particularly girls, and that it was imperative that measures should be taken to ensure that they did not become the major victims of the crisis, especially when their families were among the poorest.

6. CARICOM welcomed the emphasis placed, in the current draft resolution on the rights of children, on the importance of the right of children to express themselves freely and participate in social life, and on the related rights and duties of parents. The Caribbean region had already produced leading figures in the world of science, literature, economics and sport, and in the past 10 years no effort had been spared to encourage young people to participate actively in various national and regional programmes, like the Caribbean Youth Ambassador Programme.

7. As a result of the unremitting efforts of numerous governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, considerable progress had been made in the CARICOM countries, which were well on the way to achieving Goals 1, 2, 4 and 5 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Nevertheless, although the majority of children were happy and healthy, all too many children were still exposed to such scourges as exclusion, crime, violence, particularly domestic violence, HIV/AIDS and poverty. A four-year programme had therefore been set in motion to monitor respect for children's rights and encourage children's active participation in society.

8. Seven years after the General Assembly's special session on children, the international community must continue to make every possible effort to enable children to flourish in a world fit for them.

9. **Ms. Boutin** (Canada), speaking on behalf of the CANZ group of countries (Australia, Canada and New Zealand), reaffirmed the commitment of those countries to the rights of children. She hoped that the goal of universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child would soon be reached, as the implementation of that text and of its two Optional Protocols was one of the best ways of promoting those rights; the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations had done commendable work in that regard. The CANZ group looked forward

to participating in the first meeting in December 2009 of the Open-Ended Working Group on an optional protocol to the Convention to provide a communications procedure and welcomed the emphasis placed in the current draft resolution on children's rights on the essential right of children to express their opinion freely in all matters affecting them.

10. Priority must be given, however, to combating all forms of violence against children; that called for tireless efforts through all stages of prevention, early detection and response, and recovery. She therefore welcomed the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, who would bring proven competence and commitment to that task.

11. The World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in November 2008, had helped to strengthen and improve the legal protection offered to children, while the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children could assist States in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. On the question of children and armed conflict, Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) should help to reduce the number of cases of rape and sexual violence; moreover, persistent offenders must be punished more systematically in order for them to be held accountable for their acts. The international community must continue to progress in combating the participation of children in armed conflict, in particular by stressing the accountability of persistent offenders, strengthening the monitoring and reporting mechanism and ensuring that all types of violations were covered.

12. A global partnership between Member States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society would help to ensure respect for the rights of children so that they could reach their full potential.

13. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, which included Jamaica representing CARICOM, welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, while deeply regretting the delay in making that appointment.

14. The Rio Group commended the Human Rights Council for adopting, at its eleventh session, the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and hoped that the General Assembly would approve them.

Moreover, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it attached importance to the universal ratification of the Convention and its Protocols and their full implementation.

15. The Group, together with the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the European Union, was again one of the main sponsors of the draft omnibus resolution on the rights of children. Over the years, the resolutions adopted had supplemented the Convention and the legal system surrounding it. The Rio Group expressed the hope that the approach followed at the current session, in particular the emphasis placed on the participation of children in decision-making, would not lessen the omnibus character of the draft resolution.

16. All children had the right to express their opinion freely on all matters affecting them, with due regard for their age and maturity, and to take part in corresponding activities at school, in the family or community or in government institutions. Children could not fully exercise their basic rights unless they were treated as subjects of law within a democratic framework. In view of the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, children could not easily enjoy freedom of expression unless other rights were respected, particularly to health, food and education. Effective enjoyment of the right to development was also essential.

17. The Rio Group drew attention to child victims of enforced disappearances and called on Member States to take appropriate steps to prevent and punish abductions of minors and to cooperate in seeking to locate and identify victims, in order to reunite them with their families.

18. Seven years after its adoption, the document entitled "A world fit for children" was as relevant as ever, since its ultimate goal, which was to ensure the well-being of all children in all societies, had still not been achieved. The Latin American and Caribbean countries were committed to respecting and upholding all the rights of children; international cooperation and the promotion of development had a decisive role in protecting and promoting the well-being of children, as did civil society and individuals, not to mention the media. The measures and policies adopted must respect the best interests of children and gender equality.

19. In November 2008, the Latin American and Caribbean region had hosted the World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents and its preparatory meeting, held in Brazil and Argentina respectively. It had emerged from the deliberations that the vulnerability of children and adolescents all over the world to such crimes as rape, trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, abduction or organ trafficking was accentuated by poverty, social inequalities, discrimination, emigration, insecurity and organized crime. The Rio Group reaffirmed in that regard its firm resolve to achieve the goals of the Rio Declaration and Plan of Action to prevent and stop the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Moreover, the elimination of all forms of violence against children was essential for their personal and social development; it was important to protect children in particular situations, in particular children travelling alone, working children, children who had committed crimes or had been sentenced to death, or child victims of humanitarian or economic crises. The Rio Group welcomed the growing attention being paid by United Nations bodies, funds and programmes to combating violence against children and recommended the adoption of gender-sensitive measures to uphold their rights and fight impunity, involving the public authorities, the family and society. Lastly, stressing the importance of cooperation and of strengthening international standards and instruments, he reaffirmed the Rio Group's determination to achieve the related MDGs so as to create a world fit for children.

20. **Mr. Sparber** (Liechtenstein) said that his country supported the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly article 12 on the participation of children. Liechtenstein was in favour of the establishment of a mechanism to report violations of the provisions of the Convention; such a mechanism would also strengthen national procedures for child protection. He looked forward to discussing the matter at the next session of the Human Rights Council's working group on the subject.

21. Liechtenstein had consulted children and adolescents and taken into account their proposals when framing the law concerning them, adopted in February 2009. His delegation was of the view that Governments and legislators should seek the views of children on all matters affecting them and respect the principle of the best interests of the child.

22. Liechtenstein, which had sponsored the World Youth Assembly in 2009, wished greater account to be taken in the international arena of the opinion of children and young people. In many regions of the world, it fell to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to make known the situation of children who were deprived of freedom of expression. Liechtenstein welcomed the UNICEF report "Progress for Children. A Report Card on Child Protection", but was disturbed by some of its findings, particularly the fact that more than half of children in detention had been neither tried nor sentenced. It was all the more important that the right to a fair trial and the right to *habeas corpus* should be respected, given that children could not fully defend themselves.

23. States were obliged to provide children with a protected legal environment. First, all newborns should be registered so as to benefit from social protection and be less exposed to such crimes as trafficking, sexual exploitation and illegal adoption. As a party to the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, Liechtenstein called on States that had not yet done so to ratify that instrument as a matter of urgency. Determined to reduce statelessness among children, his country had withdrawn its reservation to article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had recently adopted a law enabling stateless children residing in Liechtenstein to acquire citizenship.

24. As an active member of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, Liechtenstein reaffirmed its support for Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) and welcomed the Council's enhanced monitoring of acts of violence against children. States bore primary responsibility for prosecuting perpetrators of serious violations of the rights of children in armed conflict, while the International Criminal Court could play a complementary role in that regard.

25. **Ms. Shinohara** (Japan) said that, 20 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, much remained to be done. Japan would make every effort to cooperate with the international community to implement the Convention, particularly articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 on non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life and the right to be heard, respectively.

26. Concerning resolution 63/241 on the rights of the child, adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-

third session, she said that Japan was greatly concerned about the world's 220 million child workers. More than half were involved in the worst forms of child labour, as child soldiers or victims of sexual exploitation, trafficking or forced labour. According to the Secretary-General's report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/64/172), education played a key role in combating child labour since it provided children with the means of defending their rights, particularly the right to participate in decision-making, and of combating inequality, thereby contributing to human security.

27. Japan welcomed the stand taken by the international community against the sexual exploitation of children, notably on the occasion of the World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. It expressed appreciation to the Brazilian Government for hosting that Congress and to UNICEF, the End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes network (ECPAT) and the NGO Group on the Convention on the Rights of the Child for their contributions to its work. The issue of child pornography required the urgent attention of the international community. Japan was committed to closer cooperation in that area on the basis of the Rio Declaration to prevent and stop the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, as part of the efforts to combat all forms of sexual exploitation.

28. Japan welcomed the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), calling on the Secretary-General to include killing and maiming of children and rape and other sexual violence in the annexes to his reports on children and armed conflict. It was important to send a strong political message to the perpetrators of such crimes; the international community must continue to monitor the implementation of that resolution and work together to ensure respect for the rights of children.

29. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that in recent years her country had experienced internal changes with a positive impact on human development and the welfare of children. The implementation of national policies on democratic security, social protection and justice, poverty reduction, economic growth and sustainable development, and the massive demobilization of illegal armed groups had allowed Colombia gradually to restore a stable and secure environment conducive to the well-being of children and to the enjoyment of their

rights. It had also aligned its legislation on the rights of children with international standards and provided funding for national, departmental and municipal action to protect children.

30. Colombia had placed the right to education at the heart of its social policy, as reflected in the importance assigned to its "Education Revolution" strategy. The school enrolment rate was now 100 per cent at primary level and 78 per cent at secondary level. It was hoped that, by 2010, 76 per cent of pupils in public schools would have access to information and communication technology. Colombia also attached great importance to preschool education and in April 2009 had launched a programme to improve access to education for children under the age of six in the poorest areas; 300,000 children should benefit in 2009 and 400,000 in 2010. Measures had also been taken to enhance the food and nutritional security of millions of children and students. In order to keep children in the education system and provide them with nutritional support, a cash transfer programme had been set up in support of families. Universal health insurance should be achieved by 2010.

31. Colombia welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative on violence against children and hoped that the relevant United Nations bodies would provide her with the necessary support, including financial support. Colombia had strengthened the national legal framework for preventing, combating and punishing acts of violence against children. It was also making efforts to eliminate domestic, community and terrorist violence and assist victims while upholding their rights. Moreover, it had agreed to submit to the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict established by Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which would strengthen the actions of national institutions responsible for defending the rights of child victims of violence. Colombia took note of the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/64/254) and requested that some of the topics and recommendations contained in it should be considered in greater detail in the light of the provisions of international law on armed conflict.

32. States must spare no effort to maintain and strengthen social protection programmes, particularly for children, in view of the serious repercussions of the financial and economic crisis on the situation of

children in various regions of the world, as emphasized by the Secretary-General in his report on the follow-up to the General Assembly special session on children (A/64/285). The United Nations should encourage States to cooperate effectively with a view to achieving the goals for children set by the General Assembly.

33. **Mr. Vigny** (Switzerland) said that the protection and promotion of the rights of children affected by armed conflict were a priority for his country. His delegation therefore welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), under which all parties to an armed conflict who killed or maimed children or committed sexual violence against them would be included in lists annexed to the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, with the possibility of targeted measures being taken against them.

34. However, in order for the situation of children in armed conflict to improve, standard-setting achievements at the international level needed to be transposed to the national level and the international community must take action for the long term. First, special efforts must be made to combat impunity and concrete measures taken against those who committed serious violations of the rules of international law in respect of children. It was therefore crucial to strengthen communication between the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant sanctions committees. Secondly, the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, UNICEF and other bodies both within and outside the United Nations system must be better coordinated and based on a common understanding of the problems and their solutions, so as to achieve tangible results and avoid duplication. Thirdly, Switzerland shared the Special Representative's view that child protection should be better integrated into United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations and political missions and that specialists in childhood protection should help to plan those missions and be involved in their technical evaluation. The know-how of United Nations country teams and UNICEF must be put to use. Fourthly, the international community should redouble its efforts with a view to the effective implementation of the Paris Principles, in particular to prevent the recruitment of children and facilitate the reintegration of victims, which should be community-based and long-term.

35. Switzerland was very concerned about the fact that, every year, some 3 million women, mainly girls under the age of 14, risked becoming victims of female genital mutilation. That practice, clearly linked to gender inequality, constituted an extreme form of violence and discrimination. Communities that engaged in it did so in the belief that they thereby ensured a girl's marriage, purity, chastity, beauty or family honour. Its continued existence was underpinned by a very strong social norm, which could be relinquished only if there were an evolution in society. Through migration, the problem of female genital mutilation had spread to Western Europe and to the American continent. Switzerland was currently developing a criminal provision that would explicitly make female genital mutilation a criminal offence. It would be possible, however, to eliminate the practice only if States cooperated with the relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations. It was essential to take further the multilateral debate on the role and approach to be adopted by countries of destination of migrants in order to compile best practices and move towards standard-setting with a view to preventing and putting an end to such mutilations.

36. **Ms. Shanidze** (Georgia) said that, as an outcome of coordinated, targeted efforts by the Government and its international partners, Georgia had made substantial progress in respect of childcare facilities. Under the Government's programme, which emphasized gate-keeping on entry, the establishment of an alternative day-care network and strengthening of the foster families network, the number of children in State institutions had been reduced by 54 per cent since 2004, and the volume of funds allocated to that programme had nearly tripled during the same period. In addition to the social services they received, families in difficulty were also provided with direct financial assistance from the State, which helped them to cope with the economic crisis and keep their children at home. The Government had also adopted national standards for improved childcare services in State institutions and a health insurance programme covering the health-care needs of 2,300 children in such institutions. At the same time, the infant mortality rate had dropped from 18 to less than 15 per thousand and the maternal mortality rate had dropped from 45 to 14 per thousand.

37. Nevertheless, Georgia faced huge problems. The conflict with the Russian Federation had taken hundreds of lives and displaced thousands of people and had even led to ethnic cleansing in the Tskhinvali region, in South Ossetia. Without the help of the international community, notably several United Nations bodies, several thousand people who had been forced from their homes would not have survived the severe winter. As for the situation in the two Georgian regions under illegal military occupation, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it had considerably worsened: the occupying forces were blocking the admission of humanitarian assistance and international observers, cutting the occupied territories off from the rest of the country and depriving their inhabitants of the right to receive an education in their mother tongue. Restrictions on movement across administrative lines prevented those living in Gali district from having access to educational and health-care facilities. It was a matter of great concern since those most affected by the situation were children and women, particularly pregnant women. In addition, the use of Georgian as a language of instruction had been deliberately discontinued in a number of State schools in the two occupied regions and children attending schools in neighbouring districts could no longer go to them.

38. The Georgian Government was anxious to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, but a necessary precondition was the complete withdrawal of the occupying forces from the two regions; moreover, a political settlement could not preclude the right of all refugees and displaced persons and their descendants, regardless of their ethnicity, to return to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as recognized in General Assembly resolution 62/249.

39. **Archbishop Migliore** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the number of States that had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols since their adoption showed that a consensus existed on the need to protect children. His delegation encouraged all States that had not yet done so to ratify those instruments and to ensure their correct application.

40. While it was encouraging that under-five child mortality had been steadily decreasing worldwide over the past two decades, it was a fact that in the previous 10 years, more than 2 million children had been killed in armed conflicts and 6 million had been disabled, tens of thousands of children had been mutilated by

anti-personnel mines and more than 300,000 had been recruited as child soldiers. In addition, all too often children's right to life was denied, in particular through prenatal selection; children were the first victims of famine and war; many lacked food and housing and had no access to education or health care, while others were sold to traffickers, sexually exploited, recruited by illegal armed groups, uprooted by forced displacements or compelled to work.

41. To eliminate violence against children, States must assume their role in protecting the family and promoting family life. Civil society also had a part to play in that regard and in combating all forms of violence against children. The Catholic Church, for its part, worked every day to provide many children with education and to help abused or neglected children to regain their place in society and, if possible, in their families. In view of the importance of the family in the lives of children, all legislation regarding children must take into account the indispensable role of parents. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the family was the natural and fundamental group unit of society and was entitled to protection by society and the State.

42. Furthermore, children should be fully respected as full human beings. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child did not contain an explicit article on the right to participate, it nevertheless provided in its article 12 that children should freely express their views and that those views should be given due weight.

43. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile) said that her country had noted with great interest the recommendations made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in her report (A/64/254), particularly the recommendation concerning the priority to be given to education as an integral aspect of emergency and humanitarian planning. States and non-State actors were called on to respect schools as zones of peace. Chile welcomed the recent adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) which, by broadening the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism provided for in resolution 1612 (2005) to include deliberate acts not constituting collateral damage, such as sexual violence against children in armed conflict, marked a step forward in their protection. Chile also welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children and recommended that she should be provided with sufficient financial and human

resources to discharge her mandate fully and within the shortest possible time. Her delegation shared the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the girl child (A/64/315) that health systems had a crucial role to play in overcoming the inequalities suffered by girls and that the elimination of early marriage, female genital mutilation and obstetric fistula would contribute to the achievement of Goals 3 and 5 of the MDGs.

44. In the area of health, her country was concerned that Goals 4 and 5 of the MDGs could not be achieved and invited the United Nations system and States to fulfil their commitments in that regard; Chile, for its part, was striving to attain those Goals through a cooperation programme for the elimination of maternal and infant mortality in Latin America. In addition, Chile had set up a system of childhood protection which catered to the needs of all children and supported their development, from conception to the age of 4, and also gave priority to the family. It had also considerably developed its network of day-care centres, whose number had increased from 700 to more than 4,000 under President Bachelet.

45. **Ms. Liu** Lingxiao (China) said that it was difficult to protect children from poverty, hunger, disease, illegal employment, drugs and sexual exploitation in the current context of financial crisis and that it was therefore necessary for developed countries to assist developing countries in meeting that challenge. Mindful of the development of its hundreds of millions of children, who made up one fifth of all the children in the world, China had set up comprehensive legislation to protect the rights of children and had established special agencies to serve their interests. The eleventh Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development, adopted in 2006, placed emphasis on upholding the rights of children to life, development, protection and participation and on the creation of an environment conducive to the growth of children and the promotion of their physical and mental development. The National Human Rights Action Plan, adopted in April 2009, also contained specific provisions to protect the rights of children.

46. The Chinese Government was continuing its efforts to improve its legal and regulatory systems for minors. To combat child trafficking, the State had established an assistance mechanism and taken specific measures to protect children in vulnerable situations, particularly girls. Steps had also been taken to allow all

children without exception to participate in family, school and social life.

47. China had always fulfilled its treaty obligations, including its obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to submit reports, which it prepared with the participation of civil society.

48. In cooperation with UNICEF, China had carried out numerous projects in a variety of areas, including health and nutrition, education, prevention of natural disasters and the development of children in poverty-stricken areas. It was no easy task to ensure the well-being of 367 million children under the age of 18, but the Chinese Government was determined to work with the international community to build a future fit for them.

49. **Ms. Juul** (Norway) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had considerably improved children's prospects for enjoying their fundamental rights and that over the past 20 years the specific rights and needs of children had been put on the international agenda. Nevertheless, much remained to be done, in particular towards the recognition that children had human rights in their own capacity. Children must be treated as competent individuals with opinions to share; their right to be heard applied in both the public and the private spheres. Under Norwegian law, children over the age of 7 and younger children who were capable of forming their own views were given the opportunity to express their views before decisions were made in cases affecting them, particularly divorces. Mechanisms also existed in Norway for children to participate in organizations, institutions, municipalities and schools; however, a number of challenges still needed to be met in order for them to participate fully in decision-making processes in the country.

50. The United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299) showed that children were at risk of violence in many contexts and that girls were particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. They also suffered from the consequences of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. According to that study, more efforts were needed to combat all forms of violence. Norway welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence



against children, who would be able to discharge her mandate effectively only if she received sufficient financial support. All Governments should therefore contribute to the UNICEF-administered Trust Fund. Norway, for its part, had allocated more than half a million dollars for the establishment of the office of the Special Representative.

51. Norway also commended the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), which called on the Secretary-General to add to his "list of shame" those parties to armed conflict that killed, maimed and/or raped children. Norway likewise welcomed the Security Council's resolve to enhance communication between its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant sanctions committees on the question of violations of the rights of children and abuses committed against children in armed conflict.

52. It was the duty of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to implement that instrument as well as to establish and strengthen effective national systems for protecting children's rights and to put particular emphasis on the promotion of children's right to health and education, since not investing in children was tantamount to not investing in development.

53. **Ms. Phipps** (United States of America) said that her country attached the utmost importance to the elimination of child labour, in particular the worst forms of child labour referred to in International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182. Since 1995, the United States Department of Labor had devoted more than \$720 million to programmes to combat child labour around the world. Some 1.3 million children had thus been rescued from exploitation in 80 countries and offered new hope through education and training, and families had been helped to cease being reliant on their children to meet their basic needs. The Department of Labor also conducted studies aimed at raising public awareness of the problem of the exploitation of children and encouraging broader action to support efforts to combat child labour and forced labour. Welcoming the work done in that area by UNICEF, to which the United States Congress had allocated \$130 million in 2009, and by ILO, the United States' two most crucial partners in the effort to protect children's rights worldwide, she said that, despite the progress made,

some 218 million children were still engaged in various forms of child labour in the world and that the United States would continue to strive to put an end to that phenomenon.

54. The United States was also committed to addressing the trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. A major nationwide study had been undertaken on the subject; its findings would provide decision-makers with a better understanding of the phenomenon and its scope. In addition, a package of outreach materials on trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children would soon be distributed to law enforcement officials, service providers, schools and parents throughout the country to help them to detect children in danger and inform them of the local and national resources available.

55. The United States was also concerned about the problem of early marriage and had introduced a resolution on the forced marriage of the girl child containing proposals for action which had been adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women by consensus in 2007.

56. Lastly, the United States was committed to protecting children from the scourges of war and preventing violence against girls in armed conflict, particularly sexual violence. Through its support for international organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United States was helping to meet the needs of refugees and conflict victims, including children. In 2008, the United States Congress had passed the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, which restricted the types of assistance that could be received by countries whose armed forces or Government-supported armed groups recruited or used child soldiers.

57. **Mr. Bui The Giang** (Viet Nam) said that his country shared the concerns of the Secretary-General about the persistence of various forms of child labour, violence against children, particularly in armed conflict, discrimination against girls and trafficking in children, as well as the high number of child victims of HIV/AIDS and drugs. While those issues called for concrete measures, the overall objective of protecting and promoting the rights of children could not be achieved unless three priorities were addressed.

58. First, it was important to incorporate the protection and promotion of children's rights into

national legal systems and socio-economic development strategies, especially in the context of the current financial and economic crisis, which led many countries to make choices that frequently ran counter to children's interests. In Viet Nam, the improved legal system for the protection of children's rights, the National Action Plan for Children (2001-2010) and the incorporation of children's issues into five-year socio-economic development plans had provided the country with a comprehensive framework in that area, thus laying solid foundations for the implementation of concrete measures.

59. Secondly, the international community as a whole needed to understand that education was essential for the sustainable protection and promotion of children's rights. In Viet Nam, the Government had recognized the need to invest in education for children and had therefore sought to achieve the highest possible rate of enrolment, retention and completion and to provide opportunities for vocational training. In the past few years, Viet Nam had achieved a school enrolment rate of 97.5 per cent at primary level and 85 per cent at secondary level. Through cooperation with UNICEF and other partners, schools had been built in remote areas and projects had been carried out targeting children with disabilities.

60. Thirdly, special attention must be given to health care for children, in particular by ensuring free vaccination, reducing child morbidity and mortality rates and providing social protection schemes. The results of efforts to achieve the HIV/AIDS-related Goal of the MDGs were disappointing. In 2007, the number of infected children between the ages of 13 and 19 had accounted for 7.15 per cent of the total number of HIV/AIDS carriers, not counting those who had lost their parents to the disease. Viet Nam therefore called on United Nations agencies and international partners to support its National Action Plan on HIV/AIDS and reaffirmed its readiness to collaborate with the international community in the best interests of children.

61. **Mr. Gaspar Martins** (Angola) said that, while fragile progress had been made internationally, the situation of children in sub-Saharan Africa remained basically unchanged where it had not deteriorated. The subregion accounted worldwide for 52 per cent of children not in school and 90 per cent of the estimated 2.1 million HIV/AIDS-infected children. Nevertheless,

Angola remained optimistic, as some progress had been made, and looked forward to achieving more.

62. Recognizing that armed conflicts and other forms of violence had a devastating effect on children, Angola reaffirmed its support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. In 2007, Angola had established the National Children's Council to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the national child protection and development policy, as well as the action of local bodies responsible for its execution. Since then, a number of instruments had been put in place, such as a mechanism to monitor the implementation of policies and gaps by age and by sex and it had been decided to establish 11 correctional facilities for boys and girls by 2011. In addition, the Angolan Government had organized the Fourth National Children's Forum, which had reviewed progress in fulfilling the 11 commitments made at the Third Forum in 2007, with a view to the achievement of the MDGs relating to children, and had made various recommendations, aimed in particular at significantly increasing the primary school enrolment rate. Angola had also developed a National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy and Plan of Action with the goal of lowering rates of chronic malnutrition and extreme poverty and eventually reducing maternal and infant mortality and promoting healthy living. Angola reaffirmed its support for the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the 2002 World Summit for Children and its full commitment to serving the best interests of children.

63. **Mr. Rakovskiy** (Russian Federation) said the principles and objectives set out in the outcome of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2) should spur all States to action and that UNICEF had an important role to play in that regard. In the Russian Federation, child protection was a national priority, reflected in particular in the "Children of Russia" programme (2007-2010). Notwithstanding the crisis, the Government had increased its assistance to large families in order to create conditions, particularly in respect of housing and education, that met international criteria. That had produced results since the birth rate had risen in some parts of the country and there had been a decrease in maternal and infant mortality, as well as child morbidity. In addition, a fund had been set up to assist

so-called problem children, under a programme targeting children in difficult situations and orphans.

64. The Russian Federation had undertaken to comply strictly with the norms of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, particularly in respect of the rights of children. In September 2008, it had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and was preparing to accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It endorsed the provisions of the Rio Declaration and Plan of Action to prevent and stop the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, adopted in 2008, particularly in regard to the suppression of pornography on the Internet, and its appeal for urgent action to punish such exploitation. The Russian Federation had thus increased criminal responsibility for crimes against juveniles and, in November 2008, had amended its Criminal Code to provide for a longer prison term for the perpetrators of such crimes as child trafficking, child pornography and its dissemination. In July 2009, the President of the Russian Federation had signed a federal law providing for heavier penalties for those found guilty of crimes against children, notably sex-related crimes, in particular repeat offenders, and in September 2009 he had established by decree a plenipotentiary office for children's rights and called on regional councils to do likewise at the level of the federated entities.

65. **Ms. Dunlop** (Brazil) welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children and said that the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child offered an opportunity to reflect on achievements and the challenges ahead. With the largest juvenile population in the Americas, numbering 62 million children and adolescents, Brazil had already incorporated the principles of the Convention into its 1988 Constitution, even before the adoption of the Convention, in 1989. It was also the first country, six months after the adoption of that instrument, to have established specific legislation, the Statute of the Child and the Adolescent, which was in full accordance with the Convention and had inspired several laws in Latin America. As a result of the Convention, children were recognized to have rights, which must be protected and promoted. Brazil had been encouraged to seek to

promote social inclusion for all, with particular attention to groups that had traditionally been subjected to discrimination.

66. Brazil had thus made considerable progress. In particular, it had reduced poverty, ensured greater access to education, reduced infant mortality and child labour and put in place a legal and policy framework to combat sexual exploitation and promote juvenile justice. Much remained to be done, however. One of the main concerns in Brazil was the situation of abandoned children. Together with other countries in the region, Brazil had engaged in a four-year consultative process which had led to the elaboration of the draft United Nations Guidelines for the Appropriate Use and Conditions of Alternative Care for Children, which had been adopted by consensus by the Human Rights Council at its eleventh session (resolution 11/7). Brazil urged States and relevant stakeholders to support those Guidelines, which the General Assembly should adopt on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Convention. She recalled, lastly, the adoption, at the World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, in 2008, of the Rio Declaration and Plan of Action, which would further the cause of the world's children.

67. **Mr. Mubarak** (Sudan) took note of the reports before the Committee, in particular that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/64/254). Sudan was very keen to cooperate with the Special Representative and intended to organize a second visit to its territory for her very soon. In the past, conflicts had broken out in the southern and eastern parts of the Sudan, where, however, peace had since been restored. Nevertheless, the country continued to suffer, in particular in Darfur, from the actions of rebel groups who refused to sit down at the negotiating table.

68. The January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Peace Agreement for Darfur and the October 2006 Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement all contained provisions to protect children and combat violence against children in armed conflict. The Interim National Constitution and the South Sudan Interim Constitution, in particular, had been guided by established international instruments for the protection and promotion of children's rights. The Sudanese National Council, in 2008, had promulgated a Children's Act, designed to bring the country's legislation into line with international instruments, in particular the

Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Sudan had ratified without reservation. The 2007 Armed Forces Act regulated the protection of the rights of children in armed conflict; it was based on the provisions of the relevant Optional Protocol and international humanitarian law. In addition, the MDGs had guided the national strategy and five-year plan (2007-2011) for the protection of children's rights, drawn up in consultation with the National Council for Strategic Planning and UNICEF.

69. In 1999, Sudan had set up a committee to combat the abduction of children and women, which had been instrumental in preventing children from being abducted during armed conflicts. In 2008, when the Justice and Equality Movement had attacked the city of Omdurman, it had been found to have children in its ranks. The children concerned had been taken into the care of the Sudanese Government, as reported by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan in her report for the period January to July 2008 (A/HCR/9/13). Sudan condemned all actions committed against children in armed conflict. He denounced, in particular, the abductions of children carried out on the border between Sudan and Chad, deploring the fact that, owing to the complicity of certain influential individuals, some of those responsible had managed to avoid being held accountable by law. He thus accused certain bodies, in particular the Arche de Zoé association, of engaging, under cover of humanitarian action, in criminal or political activities serving specific interests, which the Sudanese Government was seeking to combat. He hoped that the international community would apply pressure to the rebel movements so that they would participate in peace negotiations.

70. **Mr. Ba Hla Aye** (Myanmar) said that the goals that the world had set itself nearly 10 years earlier in the document "A world fit for children" (General Assembly resolution S-27/2) remained largely unfulfilled for, although some progress had been made, the under-five child mortality rate was still high in Asia and Africa and there were still millions of children who had not been immunized and women who died in childbirth for want of qualified assistance.

71. Having successfully carried out a project to reduce maternal and infant mortality, Myanmar had launched a five-year strategic plan for child health development (2005-2009) which should enable it to reduce by two thirds the under-five mortality rate by

2015. Under its annual immunization programme, set up in 1989, Myanmar had immunized 87 per cent of one-year-old children against measles in 2003; it was currently expanding its immunization coverage in cooperation with the World Health Organization and UNICEF. Myanmar had also been seeking to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders through a strategy known as Universal Salt Iodization, which had reduced the visible goitre rate in the country from 33 per cent in 1994 to 2 per cent in 2006. Furthermore, in order to reduce the maternal mortality rate from 3.16 to 0.79 per thousand live births by 2015, the Government had launched nation-wide safe motherhood initiatives, offering women the services of 18,000 midwives and 30,000 auxiliary midwives. Lastly, the Government had set up a National AIDS Committee to supervise the National AIDS Control Programme of the Ministry of Health. As a result, the HIV/AIDS infection rate had fallen from 1.5 per cent in 2000 to 1.3 per cent in 2005.

72. Measures had been taken to increase access to primary education and to improve the retention rate, thereby achieving a 98 per cent primary enrolment rate. To enhance the quality of education, the State was focusing on better teaching methods and teacher training.

73. To prevent the recruitment into the armed forces of children under the age of 18, child soldiers found in military camps and recruitment centres had been discharged and sent home and a working group had been set up following the visit in 2007 of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in order to coordinate United Nations country team visits to recruitment centres and to work out, with that country team, modalities for the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism.

74. Myanmar would continue to strive to achieve the goals of a world fit for children everywhere.

75. **Ms. Pérez Álvarez** (Cuba) said that, notwithstanding the progress achieved, there were still too many cases of children dying under the age of five, working for low wages, victims of organ trafficking, child pornography, prostitution, violence, sexual exploitation and hunger, or deprived of education. That situation had been exacerbated by the current economic and financial crisis.

76. In 50 years, Cuba had reduced the infant mortality rate from 60 per 1,000 live births to 4.7

through a health-care system geared to people's needs and based on universal access to free health care, upgrading of human resources, scientific and technological development and social mobilization for health promotion and disease prevention.

77. Despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States, various measures had been taken to safeguard the health of mothers and children, motivate health personnel, integrate primary health-care and hospital services, offer universal vaccination against 13 preventable diseases and achieve early detection of congenital diseases.

78. However, there was currently a shortfall of \$25 million in the Cuban public health system and its children's hospitals were finding it very hard to secure medical supplies, many of which were manufactured by United States companies. So long as countries' policies were guided by principles other than international cooperation and solidarity, millions of people would continue to suffer, including children, who were the future of humanity.

79. **Mr. Şen** (Turkey) said that his country was continuing to do its utmost to promote the rights of children and improve their living conditions. As a party to various international instruments on the rights of children, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Turkey had amended its laws, particularly the Child Protection Code, the Civil Code, the Labour Code and the Criminal Code to bring them into line with the Convention. In addition, it had revised its 2004 Constitution in order to give precedence to international conventions concerning fundamental rights and freedoms, including the rights of children, over national legislation. Lastly, Children's Rights Committees had been established in the 81 provinces of Turkey and a children's rights monitoring committee had been set up within the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

80. **Ms. Shawish** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, as part of its childhood protection policy, the Libyan Government had established kindergartens and other health care and immunization facilities, together with a children's commission to draw up policies in support of children. It had also incorporated into its legislation the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, it attached considerable importance to ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the prohibition

and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which protected children from inhuman labour and other immoral activities.

81. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was revolted by the situation of millions of children, displaced, disabled, raped and forcibly enlisted, because they had been caught up against their will in armed conflict. It called on the international community to ensure the return to their homes of the many displaced children and drew attention, in particular, to the situation of children in the occupied territories and in Palestine, who suffered on a daily basis from the effects of oppression, and to that of children in Africa subjected by continual conflicts to hunger, poverty and displacement and deprived of education.

*The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.*