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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 12th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 15 October 2014, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Mesquita Borges . . . . . (Timor-Leste)

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

**Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (continued)**

**(a) Advancement of women (continued)** (A/69/38, A/69/211, A/69/222, A/69/224, A/69/256, A/69/368, A/69/369 and A/69/396)

**(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (continued)** (A/69/182 and A/69/346)

1. **Mr. Ntwaagae** (Botswana) said that the Beijing Conference on Women had recognized that women and girls remained largely marginalised in national development processes, leading not only to an increase in world poverty, but also to the curtailment of their fundamental rights, freedoms and opportunities. Botswana thus reaffirmed its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and continued to strengthen its efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals for gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and gender-based violence. Botswana was also working to mainstream the gender perspective in its policies and programmes while enhancing education and training opportunities for women and girls and, perhaps more importantly, increasing their participation in leadership and decision-making.

2. The implementation of international commitments played a critical role in promoting sustainable development, but in his country, despite the progress made, many areas still required attention. Almost 67 per cent of its women had experienced some form of gender-based violence during their lifetime. The root causes of that violence needed to be identified and addressed, the legal framework and the policy apparatus needed to be strengthened, and greater efforts were required on the part of the Government, in collaboration with civil society, academia, development partners and United Nations agencies, to narrow the gap between commitments and the effective implementation of policies and programmes that advanced the rights and status of women.

3. **Ms. Jakubonė** (Lithuania) said that enhancing women's participation in political, economic and sociocultural life had been a priority of her country's domestic and foreign policies. Lithuania's

non-permanent membership of the Security Council and the election of the country's President as Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders had opened new avenues for it to promote the role of women in peace and security, address the challenges women faced in conflict situations and move forward the agenda of women's empowerment worldwide. Lithuania actively participated in the international initiatives and deliberations on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda. That agenda posed a unique opportunity for expediting measures aimed at increasing gender equality and the empowerment of women by, inter alia, strengthening good governance and ensuring accountability.

4. Effective institutional mechanisms were key to accelerating de facto gender equality. During its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Lithuania had proposed specific actions whereby European Union member States could bring their mechanisms and indicators into line with the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action. The European Institute for Gender Equality, which was based in Lithuania, had contributed significantly to the exchange of best practices in that regard.

5. For its part, Lithuania made every effort to mainstream gender equality in its international development cooperation policy and had successfully implemented and supported a number of gender equality projects in other countries and regions. The meeting of the European Crime Prevention Network held in Vilnius in 2013 had resulted in the publication of a handbook for practitioners on the prevention of domestic violence.

6. At the national level, the Government had drawn up an action plan for implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and launched a programme for preventing domestic violence and providing assistance to the victims of such violence. Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) played an enormous role in efforts to combat violence against women and in providing hands-on support to the survivors. Lithuania strongly advocated the active participation of men and boys and had sought to involve male role models in media campaigns to help redefine perceptions of masculinity and violence. Such efforts needed to be expanded, both at the national level and internationally.

7. **Mr. Grima** (Malta) said that Malta promoted gender mainstreaming as a strategic tool for safeguarding and promoting gender equality and the inclusion of all persons to the extent that, in 2014, it had become the first country to include gender identity as grounds for protection when its Constitution had been amended to include sexual orientation and gender identity as unlawful grounds for discrimination, and legislation to legalize civil unions for same-sex couples had been enacted earlier that same year.

8. Combating discrimination in the workplace was a priority, and the public sector was encouraged to offer flexible conditions to enable working parents to find a satisfactory work/life balance. In addition, all government agencies had to report annually on the measures taken and the progress achieved in promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming. The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality audited private companies, government departments and agencies and, where appropriate, awarded the “equality mark” to those deemed equal-opportunity employers. The Commission also provided assistance in the form of training and support in drafting equality and sexual harassment policies. His country was committed to increasing the number of women on government boards and commissions and encouraged similar initiatives in the private sector.

9. Malta was one of the first countries to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and the Government had pledged to improve protection measures and compile a database on domestic violence in the country. The Commission on Domestic Violence was working to harmonize statistics and amend legislation to ensure the provision of immediate protection to victims. The Commission was also working with the Ministry for Education, tertiary education institutions and NGOs on education campaigns aimed at eliminating violence against women.

10. A project entitled “Forms of violence in Malta — a gender perspective” had been designed to raise awareness, spread the message of zero tolerance of violence against women and girls, and inform policymakers about the situation nationwide. Through awareness-raising and information activities, the Commission was reaching out to women who were potentially affected by female genital mutilation. A bill criminalising that practice, as well as enforced

sterilization and forced marriage, was currently before parliament.

11. The post-2015 process should address, inter alia, the empowerment and rights of women and girls, gender equality, and violence against women. While reaffirming its strong support for the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the subsequent international instruments, including the Beijing Platform for Action, his delegation recalled its position that any reference, recommendation or commitment to rights and services in connection with reproductive health should not in any way create an obligation on any party to consider abortion as a legitimate form of reproductive health, rights or commodities.

12. **Ms. Kupradze** (Georgia) said that Georgia continued to make progress in bringing its national legislation into line with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international treaties. Her delegation was proud to report that the candidate of Georgia had been elected as a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for 2015-2018. In recent years, Georgia had adopted a number of national laws and action plans aimed at protecting women’s rights, including a new anti-discrimination act and more liberal regulations in the Labour Code.

13. Equal rights and equal access to education, which played a key role in advancing women’s rights and autonomy, were also guaranteed by law. As a result of those efforts, women in Georgia today held the top government posts at, inter alia, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Education and Science, and Environmental Protection, the National Security Council and the Central Electoral Commission.

14. The Government faced serious obstacles, however, in advancing and protecting women’s rights in the occupied regions of Georgia, where the humanitarian and human rights situation had deteriorated sharply with the extension of barbed wire fences along the occupation line, which denied women freedom of movement, and where their rights to education and other civil, social, economic and cultural rights were violated on a daily basis.

15. Georgia wished to thank UN Women and other United Nations agencies for working closely with

Member States in achieving progress in gender equality and the empowerment of women at the national level. Looking ahead, investments in gender equality would play a crucial role since they yielded the highest returns of all development investments and would result in faster progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and furthering the post-2015 development agenda.

16. **Ms. Sameer** (Maldives) said that in the 35 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the world had taken several steps forward on the path to gender equality. According to the indices used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in 2013 Maldives ranked first in the South Asian region in terms of gender equality and second in terms of gender-related development. Maldives had enacted a suite of legislation upholding the principles of equality and non-discrimination and providing for the equal participation of women in all activities.

17. By law, women enjoyed equal pay for equal work and were entitled to three months maternity leave with full pay. The Domestic Violence Act of 2012 had enabled safe houses to be set up for abused women, and two new laws, on sexual harassment and sexual offences, had been enacted to enable victims to face their abusers. Those, together with the Criminal Code and the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, ensured that there was no de jure discrimination against women in access to public services. As a result, gender parity had been achieved in both primary and secondary education, maternal mortality rates were down to 13 per 100,000 live births, over 99 per cent of mothers-to-be received prenatal care, and 95 per cent of births were attended by skilled health staff.

18. Despite the progress, many challenges remained. A nationwide survey showed that one in three women between the ages of 15 and 49 had suffered physical, sexual or emotional violence; one in eight reported sexual abuse as a child under 15 years of age; and, disturbingly, most perpetrators were immediate family members. Traditional attitudes and cultural norms were the tallest hurdles on the path to women's advancement. Women still had difficulty overcoming traditional stereotypes, and in employment, men still dominated key sectors.

19. Democracy would never be fully realised without the equal participation of women at all levels of

government, but the proportion of women in parliament and local councils was only 5.9 per cent and 5.3 per cent respectively. In addition, conservative interpretations of Islam had taken hold in Maldivian society, promoting practices such as under-age marriages and the non-vaccination of infants, and new trends such as declining school enrolment, which affected girls the most. Such interpretations wrongly assumed that women's participation in the public sphere should be restricted. The Government was determined to counter those attitudes and to raise awareness of women's issues, in partnership with international agencies.

20. With regard to the post-2015 development agenda, Maldives reiterated the need to maintain the stand-alone goal of gender equality and empowerment, which aspired to ensure equal rights, access and opportunities for women of all ages, colours and creeds. There could be no human development without the advancement of women and no sustainable development without gender equality.

21. **Ms. González Tolosa** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that in the past 15 years the Venezuelan Government had steadfastly pursued the incorporation of women into national life as a matter of policy. There would be no development, justice or social equity without the inclusion and participation of all members of society. Her country was committed to principles of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the agreements reached at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

22. The Government was implementing policies aimed at achieving gender equity and a society free from violence by bringing about changes in sociocultural patterns with a view to constructing a democratic, participative, parity-based society that played a leading role in the country's affairs. Various institutions had been established to promote the empowerment of women, including a government ministry, a national women's institute and a women's development bank.

23. The feminization of poverty must be tackled structurally as a matter of priority and with specific action. The Venezuelan Government therefore included women in all its social programmes. Combating gender-based violence was another priority. Support

and protection mechanisms for victims had been developed within the framework of the Act on women's right to live a life free from violence. A gender equity observatory and courts specializing in the protection of women had been established, and shelters for women at risk had been opened. Women around the world were called to participate, on the basis of equal opportunities, in development processes and the construction of peace. Her country was committed to continuing to work toward achieving those objectives.

24. **Mr. Hahn** (Republic of Korea) said that States continued to take into account the linkage between gender equality, women's empowerment and violence against women in the shaping of future development frameworks and sought to incorporate women's issues into the post-2015 development agenda not only as a stand-alone goal but also as a cross-cutting issue. The international community had reached a common understanding that recognition of women's rights was a prerequisite for sustainable development and for peace and security.

25. First, however, women's participation in decision-making processes must be promoted to erode the structural causes of gender discrimination. In that regard, his Government had set itself the goal of increasing the ratio of female members of government committees to 40 per cent by 2017 and had introduced a gender quota system to increase female representation in the National Assembly. A task force on gender parity and the representation of women had been set up and was expected to contribute significantly to the promotion of women's participation through awareness-raising and the implementation of gender-responsive policies.

26. Second, women must have access to resources and education. Countries must take measures to tackle discriminatory laws and practices. Women today accounted for 80 per cent of the world's poor: empowering them would eventually contribute to the eradication of poverty. Finally, gender-based violence was one of the most prevalent violations of human rights, yet perpetrators often remained unpunished. In keeping with the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms violence against women (A/69/222), the needs of particular groups of women must be taken into account. In that regard, women in conflict demanded particular attention.

27. The political will shown by the international community must now be translated into concrete action. In that context, the case of victims who had been forced into military sexual slavery during the Second World War, the so-called "comfort women", was a key instance of an unresolved case of sexual violence in conflict. Various United Nations human rights mechanisms had urged the Japanese Government to acknowledge responsibility and take appropriate measures to settle the issue, which was one of humanity and human dignity. Given that the victims were getting older, it should be addressed without delay. Ensuring accountability and bringing the perpetrators to justice was the only way to end the prevalent culture of impunity and eventually eliminate sexual violence in conflict.

28. **Ms. Strasser-King** (Sierra Leone) said that violence against women and many other challenges were rooted in the unequal power relations between men and women and that violence and discrimination against women constituted a major obstacle to women realizing their full potential. Sierra Leone continued to embrace the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as road maps for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Tremendous efforts had been made at the national, regional and global levels to ensure gender equality and mainstream the gender perspective into policies and programmes; yet discrimination against women remained pervasive.

29. In spite of the numerous challenges, Sierra Leone wished to reaffirm its commitment to the advancement of women, especially in the African context. To that end, her delegation welcomed the initiatives and commitments associated with the declaration of 2010-2020 as the African Women's Decade. Her country had put in place various gender equality measures, policy frameworks and institutions to address discrimination against women. At least 9.5 per cent of women had completed secondary school education, and women occupied 12.4 per cent of seats in parliament and local councils. Female participation in the labour market stood at 65.7 per cent as compared with 68.9 per cent for men.

30. The constitutional review under way would fully incorporate the rights of women and other disadvantaged groups in society. The Government had also established a national action plan to follow up on

Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, and resolution 1820 (2008), on sexual violence. Moreover, significant attention has been given to such issues as youth, children and disability, while promoting the welfare of the girl child.

31. To address the high maternal and child mortality rates, which had reached 1,165 per 100,000 live births and 92 per 1,000 live births, respectively, the Government had introduced, in 2007, a free health-care programme for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five. Efforts to improve the lives of women, however, had been undermined by the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in May 2014. The outbreak continued to wreak untold havoc on society and was putting the welfare and dignity of women at grave risk. In that regard, Sierra Leone welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) and looked forward to a speedy reversal of the current Ebola threat. The Government also look forward to sustained cooperation and partnerships in mobilizing the required resources to ensure progress in achieving the gender-related targets associated with the Millennium Development Goals.

32. **Ms. Alalaiwat** (Bahrain) said that the attention of the world was on achieving the outstanding Millennium Development Goals and preparing the post-2015 development agenda. The approach adopted in her country had resulted in the early achievement of the Goals, including those on gender equality and the empowerment of women. As representatives of half of society who had skills, determination and aspirations, their needs had been placed at the forefront of public policy. The advancement and empowerment of women had been integrated into national policies and strategies and, in keeping with the principles of equality and justice, women had equal opportunities to participate in public life, including in elections, both as voters and candidates.

33. Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim AlKhalifa, wife of the King of Bahrain, headed a women's council that promoted the advancement of women while preserving their natural role and main responsibilities in the family context. The council was implementing a national plan to advance the status of women, increase their options and promote domestic stability and family unity on the basis of equal opportunity. It partnered local and national

organizations to provide advisory and support services to women to ensure the sustainability of women's empowerment programmes.

34. Many skill-building programmes had been set up for women, who actively participated in training activities. Prizes had been established to reinforce women's roles as professionals and in politics and for civil society organizations. A second Bahraini women's conference was being organized to follow up on women's needs in light of national and international developments.

35. Bahrain had fulfilled its commitments in relation to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Council of Ministers had agreed to take the necessary legal steps to have the country's reservations to the Convention redrafted in such a way that was compatible with sharia and upheld the country's sovereignty. In addition, a bill on domestic violence had been drawn up, and a joint committee had been established to create a single database on domestic violence and mechanisms for combating violence against women and girls.

36. **Mr. Beck** (Solomon Islands) said that his country had recently passed legislation to protect families from domestic violence, deal with perpetrators and provide practical support to victims of violence. During the national review of its implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), Solomon Islands had identified achievements in the recognition of gender equality, economic empowerment of women and awareness of gender violence.

37. Women and girls had to struggle against the impact of climate change, which impeded the realization of their human rights, halted their progress and prevented them from living a productive life. Recent floods in Solomon Islands had shaved off more than 9 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP). Although seven gender resolutions had been passed by the General Assembly during its previous session, they had not really included anything about the impact of climate change on the lives of communities. However, his delegation was pleased to see that addressing climate change featured in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

38. It was time for the Third Committee to monitor more closely the right of women and girls to survive climate change. According to the Intergovernmental

Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global temperature would rise to 3.7-4.8°C, and 89 per cent of coral reefs were projected to experience severe coral bleaching by 2030, which would impact on tourism industries and fish stocks, potentially driving households in small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) into poverty. There should be a shift to look at hydropower rather than solar power for renewable energy in order for more populations to benefit from it.

39. **Ms. Boiko** (Ukraine) said that Ukraine had been among the first Member States to join the Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women and was the seventeenth member State of the Council of Europe to sign the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

40. In order to combat gender-based violence, her country had identified overcoming gender stereotypes, carrying out systematic work with individuals who committed violence, and monitoring and responding rapidly to gender discrimination as key tasks to be achieved. It had adopted a number of sectoral and intersectoral programmes aimed at implementing gender-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The most progressive measure had been the adoption of the State Programme on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2016.

41. The conflict in the east of Ukraine, which was disrupting normal life, destroying infrastructure and affecting mobilization of resources, and the illegal annexation of Crimea might jeopardize Ukraine's progress in achieving the MDGs. The latest report by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine indicated incidents of sexual and gender-based violence in the east. Women who had remained in the area were forced to clean, cook and wash clothes for the members of illegal armed groups supported by the Russian Federation. Volunteers helping to evacuate people had received first-hand reports of rape or detention of women at check-points. Women had also been abducted by illegal armed groups and their whereabouts remained unknown.

42. **Mr. Tanin** (Afghanistan) said that the election of the new President and national unity Government represented an important moment for the women of Afghanistan. In the President's first address, he had

pledged to promote women's advancement in Afghanistan and highlighted the important role that his wife had played during the campaign. The First Lady would oversee a committee aimed at providing advice, technical support and expertise to the President on women's issues. It was the first time that the First Lady in Afghanistan had adopted a public role, which had great power to inspire. During the Presidential elections, millions of women had voted despite threats to their lives, and many women had been elected to seats in provincial councils, which marked significant process.

43. The Constitution of Afghanistan guaranteed the equal rights of all Afghan men and women. The Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan had been adopted to safeguard the rights of women. Policies to encourage women's political participation had also been adopted and women now comprised 22 per cent of Government employees and 27 per cent of the members of Parliament. Thanks to policies to enhance women's access to health services, maternal and infant mortality rates had fallen. In the economic sector, women managed and led 700 small companies, which was a stark contrast to the past when women had had zero involvement in economic life in Afghanistan.

44. Nevertheless, women had been profoundly affected by three and a half decades of conflict, in addition to negative traditional practices that discriminated against them, low levels of literacy, lack of job opportunities and widespread poverty. Afghan women were subjected to violence, child marriage and gender discrimination and lacked access to the justice system. The President's focus on enhancing the rule of law would greatly improve the situation for women. Their full participation in the country's future was imperative.

45. **Mr. Beleffi** (San Marino) said that one of the priorities of the national policy of San Marino was the protection of women's rights and the promotion of their role in society. The Parliament had adopted important legal provisions and enforced measures to protect women and strengthen the prevention and repression of violence against women. Secure shelter and psychological and other assistance were provided to victims of domestic violence. The police forces were given specialized training on how to deal with domestic violence.

46. In 2008 San Marino had established the Authority for Equal Opportunities, which promoted and supported any initiative aimed at the prevention of violence and the provision of support to victims. The Authority for Equal Opportunities acted in coordination with the Health Authority in order to guarantee the collection of data on violence against women and gender violence.

47. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that Burundi had understood that it must tackle all forms of discrimination against women even in a post-conflict setting. In spite of the difficult situation in the country, reform programmes, action plan strategies and projects to promote women had been implemented in several priority areas with the aim of ensuring more equal access to high quality social services and investment means, as well as the effective participation of women in the running of the country.

48. On the basis of the guidelines of the Strategic Framework to Combat Poverty and Vision Burundi 2025, the Government had reviewed its National Gender Policy with a view to strengthening efforts to eliminate gender disparity. The Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender received budgetary allocations to implement policies and programmes for the promotion of women, support projects of women's organizations and combat violence against women and children.

49. Legislative measures had been adopted to encourage the participation of women in decision-making and strengthen penalties for perpetrators of violence against women. A provision to guarantee the protection of women had been introduced, which, inter alia, increased liability for trafficking, exploitation and prostitution of women and girls, enabled human rights bodies to appeal in favour of victims and coordinated the actions of various bodies dealing with gender-based violence.

50. Since the first post-conflict democratic elections in 2005, the Burundian Constitution had provided for a minimum of 30 per cent representation of women in decision-making bodies. The quota was more or less adhered to by the Government, which was 39 per cent female, and the National Assembly, of which almost 30 per cent were women. In addition, women occupied important positions in the ministries of health, agriculture, the civil service, trade, transport, regional

integration and human rights. There were also female senior officers in the defence and security forces.

51. Since enrolment in primary education had been made free, gender parity in primary schools had almost been achieved. In order to ensure gender parity in secondary and higher education, the problem of school dropouts must be solved, which was sometimes linked to the economic circumstances of girls and women and early pregnancy. The provision of free health care, aimed at ensuring that pregnant women and children under five had access to health care, had had positive effects. Several training and awareness-raising programmes on the personal and family code had been implemented, and a national women's forum had been established.

52. **Mr. El Hacen** (Mauritania) said that the advancement of women had become a main priority of the Government, which had adopted a national strategy for gender equality and the advancement of women aimed at freeing Mauritanian women from various social and economic obstacles. The July 1991 constitution consecrated gender equality before the law and also guaranteed all the economic, political, civil, social and cultural rights of women in line with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Mauritania was also committed to the goals of various international summits and had signed conventions relating to the advancement of women, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

53. The economic participation of women had been reinforced, leading to improved employment rates among women, who now also had access to banking, loans and land security. New commercial networks led by women were being established and promoted. A policy of positive discrimination had been launched, leading to a stronger presence of women at all levels. Women occupied senior and decision-making positions. In the latest legislative elections, they had won 21 per cent of the national assembly seats. There were several female ministers in the Government, and women also worked in local government, diplomatic missions, the police and the judiciary.

54. Mauritania had improved living conditions for women and created a positive and constructive environment to give them their rightful place in society. Gender equality had been mainstreamed in all



national programmes, including the adoption of the civil status code. Literacy and enrolment of girls in schools were encouraged, and work was underway to change attitudes towards women. Women's health was another priority area, and the Government had been focusing on maternal and infant health by fighting harmful practices and guaranteeing access to health services and reproductive health programmes. Mauritania was committed to continuing to work towards the MDGs, especially Goal 3, gender equality and the empowerment of women, which should be included in the post-2015 development agenda.

55. **Ms. Ng'ambi** (Zambia) said that Zambia was committed to promoting educational opportunities and the rights of the girl child by removing impediments in that regard. The Government guaranteed the right to basic education through the 2011 Education Act, which promoted equal access to education and participation in and successful completion of education irrespective of gender, social class or disability. It had embarked on the construction of more universities in order to meet the demand for tertiary education and had also introduced human rights in the tertiary school curriculum to increase awareness of and respect for human rights among both sexes.

56. Her Government had introduced collaborative programmes that enhanced women's participation in national development through an increased number of women in decision-making positions and the implementation of programmes for the eradication of all forms of discrimination against them. It had been working with financial institutions to improve financial literacy among women, and there were also a number of economic empowerment initiatives and strategies, such as the Citizens Economic Empowerment Fund, Youth Development Fund and Women's Economic Empowerment Fund. Zambia was also in the process of establishing a women's bank to improve their access to finance, especially in rural areas.

57. In 2013, her country had embarked on a zero tolerance campaign against child, early and forced marriages, which was being championed at a higher level through an interministerial committee. The Anti-Gender-Based Violence Act of 2011 sought to protect women from several forms of abuse and also promoted women's financial independence and economic empowerment.

58. **Mr. Madut** (South Sudan) said that in South Sudan women were marginalized in the social and economic sphere and were therefore unable to contribute effectively to social, economic and political development. The South Sudan Development Plan recognized that there was a high correlation between poverty, social vulnerability and gender inequality. The Government had adopted a national action plan for combating gender-based violence, national policies for women's empowerment and girls' education, and a national strategy on female genital mutilation. In 2008, it had adopted a quota system of 25 per cent for women in its electoral law, which had increased the number of women in the Government and the National Assembly.

59. His Government had set an ambitious target of ensuring by 2015 that all boys and girls were able to complete full primary schooling. The literacy rate among those aged 15 to 25 had improved from 28 per cent in 2006 to 40 per cent in 2009. Males registered 38 per cent literacy compared to 18 per cent for women. Several policies and strategies had been undertaken to strengthen the education system, including a proposal by the Ministry of Education and Gender to establish girls-only primary and secondary schools.

60. His country had set a target of reducing maternal mortality by 20 per cent within the first three years of statehood. It was also committed to controlling malaria, which remained the most common cause of illness and death among children under five and pregnant women in South Sudan, through a number of programmes fashioned around the Roll Back Malaria Global Strategic Plan 2005-2015, the aim of which was to ensure that those at risk had access to the most suitable and affordable drugs. There had been improvements in access to better sources of drinking water throughout the country, but a gender policy in water resource management was required to protect the rights of women and girls.

61. The above-mentioned steps had been reversed in some parts of South Sudan following the crisis that had erupted in December 2013. Many women and children had been displaced from their homes. The Government was determined to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis through a negotiated peace agreement, currently under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

62. **Ms. Mohamed** (Ethiopia) said that, following the adoption of the right mix of policies and legal reforms to ensure that women had equal access to land and property, the total number of women with land-holding certificates in Ethiopia had reached over 8.5 million, and the number of women who had become house owners in both rural and urban areas was also on the rise. The Federal Housing Scheme reserved 30 per cent of constructed houses for women, and the rest were to be divided equally between men and women.

63. The Government facilitated women's access to finance through savings and credit, enhancing capacity building and skills training, and enabling women in business and entrepreneurship to access the market easily. Despite the fact that some female entrepreneurs were severely restricted by family responsibilities and sociocultural factors, recent data demonstrated positive changes in women's economic status, with 60 per cent of women employed in small and micro-enterprises, 44 per cent engaged in service, 30 per cent in trade and 11 per cent in production and handicrafts work. The Government provided leadership training focusing on women, made scholarship opportunities available to female employees to obtain graduate and post-graduate degrees, and had established legislative and administrative frameworks to encourage women to form trade unions, professional organizations and women's leagues, thus paving the way for female leaders to emerge.

64. Women's basic health needs were being improved through the provision of safe abortion services, services for HIV patients and free maternal health services. Playing a key role in improving health-care services in Ethiopia, 38,000 female health workers had been trained and deployed in urban and rural areas through the national health extension programme.

65. The Ministry of Justice had established a special prosecution unit at national and regional levels to expedite the handling of cases of abuse of women on a priority basis. Conviction rates had increased enabling female victims to report their cases to the court easily. Victims were entitled to free legal aid. However, the lack of financing for intervention programmes and the need for technical support to deal with violence against women, abuse of young girls, early child marriage, trafficking of women and physical or psychological dependence on abusers still needed to be addressed. In that regard, global partnerships were critical in order to promote women's rights and enable developing

countries to mainstream gender issues and empower women in their societies.

66. **Ms. Haile** (Eritrea) said that for development to be meaningful, benefits should be shared by all members of society. The empowerment of women would be realized through collective action and a comprehensive approach at the international, regional and national levels. Regional organizations and the United Nations could play an important part in this work.

67. Gender equality was constitutionally guaranteed in her country. The national gender action plan was being reviewed and would focus on education, health, economic empowerment and power sharing and decision-making processes. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been translated into local languages and widely disseminated.

68. Eritrea had integrated the Millennium Development Goals into its national development agenda and achieved positive results. The total number of girls in school as well as the ratio of girls to boys had significantly increased, and the maternal mortality rate had declined from 998 per 100,000 live births in 1986-1995 to 486 per 100,000 live births in 2006-2010, putting her country on track to achieve Millennium Development Goal 5.

69. Violence against women was a criminal offence in her country. That included practices such as female genital mutilation and underage marriage. The National Union of Eritrean Women was spearheading the fight against those practices, and media and grassroots campaigns were being carried out with the involvement of community and religious leaders. Her country was also working with neighbouring States to combat human trafficking.

70. **Mr. Nduhuura** (Uganda) said that the advancement of women and gender equality were essential for political, economic and social development. Discrimination against women was a historical reality cutting across all cultures that called for individual and collective action. This was most urgent in developing countries, and especially in Africa, and would involve ensuring peace and security, good health services, quality education and conscious promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

71. The sustainable achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the eradication of poverty would only be possible through socioeconomic transformation. The Government aimed to integrate women and gender issues into every stage of all development processes. Steps had been taken to ensure women's rights were fully respected in family, education, employment, health care and nutrition policies. As a result, his country was on track to achieve gender parity in primary school enrolment, women now constituted 34 per cent of the members of Parliament, and the number of women working in the non-agricultural sector had increased from 28.1 per cent to 33.4 per cent between 2006 and 2009.

72. Microcredit had been made available to many rural women through savings societies, and access to both safe drinking water and essential drugs had significantly increased. However, there were still areas of concern, such as the number of early pregnancies, which accounted for 44 per cent of pregnancy-related complications, and the fact that 8 per cent of women in the country had HIV/AIDS (compared to 6.1 per cent of men).

73. Uganda was committed to eliminating violence against women, including domestic violence and sexual violence in conflict situations. The Domestic Violence Act and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act had been passed in 2010, and an equal opportunities commission and girls' education strategy were in place. However, various forms of violence against women still existed and were aggravated by poverty and poor living conditions.

74. His country recommended that the post-2015 development agenda should mainstream gender equality into all goals. Targets should include girls completing all cycles of education; decent work for all; women's participation in peace, security, governance and accountability; and social protection for chronically unemployed or poor persons, particularly older women, widows, persons with disabilities, orphans and children living in the streets, refugees and internally displaced persons. Lastly, Uganda reaffirmed its commitment to achieving the MDGs and adopting the New Partnership for Africa's Development strategic programmes as part of its development agenda.

75. **Ms. Izata** (Angola) said that it was of the utmost importance to empower women and reaffirmed her

country's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

76. The Government had approved legal instruments on gender equality, combatting violence against women, protecting victims of violence and the uniform operation of safe houses and family counselling centres. Through its gender empowerment policy, it was sustainably improving the condition of women in all sectors of national life. Women in her country were better represented in public office than those in many other African countries, and more girls were attending school.

77. With regard to reproductive health, the maternal mortality rate had declined, and women now had better access to medical centres and sexual and reproductive health services. There was a focus on improving the situation of women in rural areas, including an action plan to support rural women, a family farming programme, training on processing fruit and vegetables, training on how to increase agricultural productivity and technical support for midwives.

78. **Mr. Nina** (Albania) said that his country was promoting women's rights through legal measures, awareness-raising, the media, cooperation with civil society and non-governmental organizations, the education system and services to support victims of domestic violence. Its legal framework had been improved by ratifying a series of key international documents and making the necessary amendments to national legislation to ensure that it complied with international law.

79. Recent changes had made domestic violence, marital rape and sexual harassment criminal offences and introduced heavier punishments for offenders. A network of institutions providing immediate support for victims had been established, in addition to a rehabilitation centre which had accommodated 34 women in 2012-2013. Measures to increase the number of reports filed and court protection orders issued had been introduced, and access to legal aid had been expanded.

80. The national strategy on gender equality and the reduction of gender-based and domestic violence for 2011-2015 was focused on strengthening institutional and legal mechanisms, increasing women's participation

in decision-making and bringing about the economic empowerment of girls and women. It sought to address the needs and rights of people of both genders and took due account of the needs of women who were disadvantaged owing to disability, social origin, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

81. A national action plan for 2014-2019 provided for concrete activities to launch a national youth movement for gender equality and building the capacity of professionals and community leaders to address gender equality and domestic violence issues. Awareness-raising campaigns had been organized, with activities including conferences, meetings, and television and radio programmes. Citizens were more open-minded and had a greater awareness of gender issues, and violence was being reported more frequently.

82. Gender had been mainstreamed in the standards for teachers, and gender equality was among the criteria used in the selection of school texts. His country's investment in gender equality and combatting domestic violence had been increasing, although it was not possible to determine how much of the national budget had been dedicated to that issue. Lastly, Albania reiterated its commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

83. **Ms. Saddy** (Niger) said that economic, social and political development was only possible if people at every level of society, including women, were involved. Her country's national policy on the promotion of women was centred on respecting the rights of women and recognizing them as stakeholders in the task of national construction, eliminating discrimination against women, promoting gender equality, creating equal opportunities and protecting women and children and recognizing their value within the family unit.

84. Women in Niger were very active in socioeconomic and political life, but did not yet exercise a great deal of leadership. However, 10 per cent of elected positions and 25 per cent of appointed positions, according to law, had to be held by women. The Government had recently proposed revising those percentages to 15 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively. Several microfinance institutions had

been established to enable women to engage in income-generating activities, and women were frequently given parcels of land to farm by the Ministry of Agriculture.

85. Various laws relating to gender issues were in force. For example, girls had to attend school until age 16, which would reduce the rates of illiteracy and early marriage, in addition to providing professional opportunities. Her country also had a law on reproductive health and a gender policy and action plan. Female genital mutilation was punishable by prison terms and fines, and awareness-raising and training on that issue had taken place.

86. Laws were in force to combat human trafficking, and projects with a non-governmental organization had been launched in July 2014 to combat that problem. In 2011, a government section dedicated to combatting gender-based violence had been created, and a national observatory on the promotion of women had been put in place.

87. **Ms. Rahimova** (Azerbaijan) said that the eradication of violence against women was essential in itself but also necessary for the realization of all other categories of human rights. The United Nations had an important role to play, primarily in ensuring that Member States complied with their international obligations and the recommendations of the relevant treaty bodies.

88. The Security Council, with its mandate on women, peace and security, should ensure that the rule of law in conflict and post-conflict situations comprehensively promoted justice and accountability so as to further promote equal rights and women's participation in decision-making, which were central elements to conflict prevention and long-term stability. Her country therefore welcomed the emphasis on the importance of policies to put an end to impunity and promote a culture of accountability in the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences ([A/69/368](#)).

89. During its presidency of the Security Council in October 2013, her country had convened an open debate on women, the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict-affected situations that had resulted in the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013). Azerbaijan was looking forward to the high-level review and the outcomes of the global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). It welcomed

the work of UN Women and was ready to contribute to the review process. High priority should be given to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, related conventions and enforcement efforts at the national level.

90. Targeted measures were in place in her country to foster female entrepreneurship and women's empowerment. For example, awareness-raising campaigns had been organized on the gender equality law, and programmes had been developed to improve access to employment, housing and health care for women from marginalized groups. The Government was also working with the United Nations Development Programme to encourage entrepreneurship among women in rural areas.

91. Legal and social protection was available for victims of domestic violence, and the number of female police officers and social resources had been increased in order to support victims. Awareness-raising activities were being carried out through the education system and at the community level, with an emphasis on groups such as elderly women and women with disabilities. Human trafficking was another way in which women and girls were exposed to violence and risks to their health. That issue should be tackled through analysis of its root causes, particularly in the countries of destination.

92. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that creating more stable and just societies where women and men were equally able to exercise their rights would be impossible without creating equal opportunities for the participation of both sexes in all spheres of life and at all levels. The elimination of violence against women and the protection of women's rights were interwoven with all three pillars of the United Nations.

93. Montenegro had made efforts to set up its legislative framework and implement educational and media activities in such a way as to foster gender equality, with a particular focus on participation in political life, access to decision-making positions, economic empowerment, entrepreneurship and violence against women. One in four parliamentary candidates now had to be a woman.

94. Improving the lives of girls and women should be at the centre of the post-2015 development framework. His country therefore welcomed the fact that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls had a been given its rightful place as a stand-alone goal in

the outcome document of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals. His country believed that gender-specific targets and indicators should also be indicated across other goals, and therefore welcomed the conclusion of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which called for integrating a strong gender dimension in the post-2015 development agenda. His country also recognized the vital role of UN Women and welcomed the contribution that it had made.

95. Recognizing the important role of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, Montenegro reiterated its support for Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The participation of women was essential to achieving lasting peace and also to establish procedures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence. He thanked the United Kingdom for organizing the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict earlier that year. The capacity of States to investigate and prosecute sexual violence crimes was fundamental to preventing violence. That was a huge educative task, and Member States must criminalize such acts.

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

96. **Mr. Hisajima** (Japan), responding to the statement by the representative of the Republic of Korea, said that Japan was sincerely addressing the issue of women's rights and had made the greatest possible efforts thus far from the moral point of view to facilitate feasible remedies for the former "comfort women". Prime Minister Abe had stated that his view was no different from that of previous prime ministers and that he was deeply pained at the immeasurable suffering of the "comfort women".

97. **Mr. Hahn** (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation was deeply concerned that Japan continued to deny its responsibility towards the victims of military sexual slavery. The issue had never been addressed in the course of negotiating the 1965 *Agreement on the settlement of problems concerning property and claims and economic co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea*. Therefore the responsibility of the Japanese Government remained effective. That had been reaffirmed on numerous occasions by United Nations human rights mechanisms.

98. Both the 1996 report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (E/CN.4/1996/53/Add.1) and the 1998 report of the Special Rapporteur on systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1998/13) confirmed that neither the San Francisco Peace Treaty nor any of the bilateral treaties concluded thereafter were concerned with human rights violations in general or military sexual slavery in particular. They had recommended that the Government of Japan should accept its legal responsibility and pay compensation to the victims. The same opinion was shared by various United Nations human rights treaty bodies.

99. The Japanese Government had said that it had apologized to the victims. However, the recent remarks and actions of the Japanese leadership were in stark contrast with its stated position. The political leaders of Japan had attempted to re-examine the so-called Kono Statement of 1993, which was released by the then-chief cabinet secretary Yohei Kono to acknowledge and apologize for the involvement of the Japanese military in forcing Korean women to serve as sexual slaves for the Japanese military. Such actions constituted a direct challenge to the historical truth as well as the consistent recommendations made to Japan by various United Nations mechanisms over the past twenty years. Given that most of the surviving victims were at an advanced age, Japan should recognize the increasing urgency of resolving the issue. The matter could be resolved only when Japan accepted its responsibility and took the measures recommended by the various human rights mechanisms of the United Nations system.

100. **Mr. Rakofsky** (Russian Federation) said that some delegations seemed to be using the discussions on important human rights issues to advance their own narrow, unrelated agendas and make insinuations about his country. Those countries wished to blame the Russian Federation for the consequences of their lack of desire or ability to address their own problems in a civilized manner. As a result of the indiscriminate and widespread use of armed forces by Ukraine in the east of the country, almost 3,700 people had died and nearly 9,000 had been injured, 15 per cent of whom were women. Ukraine had committed serious violations of international humanitarian law, which should be investigated. The Russian Federation completely

rejected the fictional accusations that had been made against it.

101. **Mr. Hisajima** (Japan) said that the legal issue of reparation needed to be finally and completely resolved between Japan and the Republic of Korea. The articles that had been published by the Asahi Shimbun newspaper, which had probably had a strong influence on report E/CN.4/1996/53/Add.1, had recently been retracted as false. The Prime Minister had repeatedly stated that Japan had no intention of reviewing the Kono Statement.

102. **Mr. Hahn** (Republic of Korea) reiterated his country's firm position that it was time for the Japanese government to recognize its responsibility and to prove its sincerity by taking acceptable steps, as recommended by the international community. Acknowledging those historical facts was the only way to prevent similar tragic and inhumane acts in the future.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*