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Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland)

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

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (A/72/38)

(a) Advancement of women (A/72/93, A/72/134, A/72/207 and A/72/215)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/72/203 and A/72/220)

1. **Ms. Puri** (Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)) said that 2016 had provided key opportunities to strengthen the implementation of global commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment had outlined concrete actions for accelerating progress towards the full and equal economic participation of women. Additionally, the Commission on the Status of Women, at its sixty-first session, had focused on women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work and had stressed that laws and regulations upholding the principle of equal pay for equal work in the public and private sectors were critical to eliminating the gender pay gap. UN-Women had therefore partnered with the International Labour Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to launch the Equal Pay International Coalition to support Governments, employers and workers, their organizations and other stakeholders in that regard. The gender pay gap should also receive attention in the work of the Second Committee. The 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development had conducted a review of Sustainable Goal 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. The forum had stressed that gender equality strategies must be fully integrated into national sustainable development frameworks so as to promote greater policy coherence. The achievement of gender equality would require both targeted action and the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into all efforts.

2. The UN-Women strategic plan 2018–2021 would focus on assisting States in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in areas such as eliminating discriminatory laws and policies and addressing the norms and stereotypes that hindered women's equality. It was also focusing on data collection to assist in implementing strategies and monitoring progress. The United Nations system was also focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Secretary-General had launched an

initiative to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations, and the goal of the system-wide strategy on gender parity was to achieve parity at the senior levels of leadership by 2021 and across all levels by 2028. The report of the Secretary-General on improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system (A/72/220) had revealed that the representation of women continued to be negatively correlated with seniority, with women occupying only 26.8 per cent of positions at the highest level. However, concrete actions had a positive impact, such as more rigorous implementation of existing policies, including temporary special measures; improved working conditions, especially in the field; an enabling environment through strengthened parental leave, flexible work, anti-harassment policies and spousal work opportunities; and compliance with the minimum standards of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Those initiatives sought to transform the institutional culture and allow the United Nations to lead by example and make gender parity a reality.

3. The report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/72/203) aimed to support the General Assembly in monitoring the integration of gender perspectives. While it was clear that gender perspectives were being increasingly integrated in the reports of the Secretary-General, progress in gender mainstreaming remained uneven across intergovernmental bodies. The number of resolutions incorporating a gender perspective at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly had been lower than at some previous sessions, and the number considered by the Economic and Social Council had remained below its peak in 2014. UN-Women stood ready to provide support and technical input to the General Assembly and its main committees for the drafting of gender-responsive recommendations and resolutions.

4. The report of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (A/72/215) highlighted the urgent need to address and eliminate such violence and respond to the gendered dimensions of migration. The rights, concerns and contributions of migrant women, including women migrant workers, should be a central consideration in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, and UN-Women would continue to support Member States in that process. In addition, the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural

areas (A/72/207) provided recommendations in several areas, including economic and social policies, ending violence against women and girls, education, health, land, inheritance and property rights, decent work, social protection, labour-saving infrastructure and technology. Furthermore, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had issued general recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women in March 2016, and the Commission on the Status of Women would focus on gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls in 2018.

5. Institutional mechanisms must have the authority and capacity to galvanize the implementation of commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and ensure accountability from Governments and other actors. She called on the members of the Committee to encourage greater focus on gender perspectives in the discussions and outcomes of all committees and intergovernmental processes and urged them to support the proposed programme budget for the next biennium, which increased resources for UN-Women to undertake its normative work. With the policy frameworks and political commitments in place, the international community must now work diligently to achieve tangible results to meet the Sustainable Development Goals; it could not wait until 2030 to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

6. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom fully supported the outcomes of the report of the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment and the toolkits that had been prepared to facilitate implementation. The United Kingdom was a co-chair of the Group of Champions for women's economic empowerment and invited Member States to collaborate with the Group on the work of the Third Committee. There must be real, tangible progress in implementing the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and in achieving gender parity at all levels within the United Nations system.

7. **Mr. Mohamed** (Guyana) said that his delegation looked forward to increased collaboration between UN-Women and States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), especially with regard to funding. The Caribbean had suffered a devastating hurricane season, which had had a serious impact on small island States, the commitments made by their Governments and their national budget allocations. The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration was a step in the right direction for protecting migrant workers, especially women migrant workers, and Guyana looked forward to addressing the situation of

rural women at the 2018 session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

8. **Ms. Puri** (Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), responding to questions, said that the United Kingdom had strongly encouraged the entire United Nations system to prioritize the issue of women's economic empowerment, and she was grateful for its support for the work of the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, which she hoped would have a lasting impact on the ground in States members of the Group of Champions, as well as other States and stakeholders. Through the Equal Pay International Coalition, UN-Women was working with other United Nations partners to ensure that the High-level Panel's recommendations were implemented and that the relevant drivers were highlighted in national policymaking and legislation.

9. Gender parity had been a long-standing commitment. For that reason, the Secretary-General had declared that there must be a game-changing strategy to break through the previous barriers and resistance. There was a strong connection between the accountability framework of the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the way in which United Nations entities delivered on the gender parity issue within their organizations. Nearly 20 agencies were close to or had exceeded gender parity. UN-Women would therefore be working to achieve the gender parity targets under the Action Plan, but would also collaborate with human resources to target areas such as recruitment, retention, re-entry, promotion, working conditions, unconscious bias and the creation of a new culture of gender equality.

10. UN-Women would continue to work in close partnership with CARICOM under the recent Memorandum of Understanding on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The horrific hurricane season had had a tremendous impact on all people, including women and girls, and UN-Women had been active on the ground to support the humanitarian response and resilience-building efforts.

11. **Ms. Leinarte** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that the Committee had continued to actively promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It encouraged States parties to report on efforts to meet the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals relating to gender equality, both in their written replies to the lists of issues and questions and in the constructive dialogues held with State party delegations. Most of the 27 sets of

concluding observations that had been adopted by the Committee since October 2016 had linked specific Goals and targets to relevant articles in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Committee had collaborated closely with UN-Women, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to develop methodologies to monitor indicator 5.1.1, relating to legal frameworks to end discrimination against women, and indicator 5.a.2, relating to women's rights to land ownership and control. In its submissions to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Committee had identified concrete steps that must be taken by States in order to realize women's rights and eradicate poverty.

12. In July 2017, the Committee had adopted general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19. The new general recommendation expanded the scope of the definition of violence against women to include all forms of gender-based violence, thereby strengthening the understanding that it was a social rather than individual phenomenon. The general recommendation stressed that women's exposure to violence was linked to various forms of inequalities and was frequently a consequence of intersecting forms of discrimination. It elaborated on the due diligence obligation of States parties to prevent gender-based violence and protect women and observed that the prohibition of gender-based violence against women had evolved into a principal of customary international law. Furthermore, the general recommendation expanded the understanding of violence to include violations of sexual and reproductive health rights and stressed the need to change social norms and stereotypes that supported violence in the context of culture, tradition or religion. It called for the repeal of all laws and policies that directly and indirectly excused, condoned and facilitated violence. More than 100 stakeholders had submitted comments during the public consultation on the draft general recommendation, many of which had been included in the final version.

13. The Committee continued work on its draft general recommendation on the right of women and girls to education with a view to clarifying the obligations of States parties under article 10 of the Convention to ensure that education was accessible and affordable for all women and girls, of high quality and free from violence and that patriarchal stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes exacerbating the sexual abuse and harassment of women and girls, including in educational settings, were eradicated. The Committee was also drafting a general recommendation on the

gender aspects of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate to provide guidance on developing measures to achieve gender equality as a way to reinforce the resilience of women and communities in the context of climate-induced disasters. It was also considering potential general recommendations that would focus on indigenous women, gender stereotypes and trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration and violence against women. Given that the human and financial resources available limited the number of general recommendations that could be adopted, she asked Member States to help determine which should be a priority.

14. The Optional Protocol to the Convention had been ratified by 109 States. Despite financial constraints, the Committee had taken action on 11 individual complaints in 2016, most of which had concerned cases of gender-based violence against women. With the help of its Working Group on Inquiries under the Optional Protocol, the Committee continued to work on a number of confidential inquiry submissions alleging grave or systematic violations by a State party. It had implemented many of the measures in General Assembly resolution [68/268](#) on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system and had examined the simplified reports of three States parties but had temporarily suspended the simplified reporting procedure with regard to new requests.

15. **Ms. Omiya** (Japan) said that the Government had implemented several measures to promote women's empowerment. Japan strongly supported the general recommendations of the Committee and would continue in its efforts to create a society in which women could be independent and fully enjoy their rights without fear of violence or discrimination. Given that strengthened partnerships among human rights treaty bodies, United Nations organizations, Member States and civil society was necessary to end violence against women, she wondered whether the Committee had taken concrete measures to build stronger partnerships with other stakeholders. More information on the ways in which Governments could collaborate with the Committee would be welcome.

16. **Mr. Burri** (Switzerland) said that general recommendation No. 35 provided technical and normative guidance for Member States. The Committee should continue to highlight the issue of women and peace and security within the framework of the Convention and to make contributions to the work of the high-level political forum in order to monitor progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. His delegation was firmly convinced that an open, inclusive

and transparent commitment from civil society would contribute to the establishment, monitoring and implementation of specific recommendations at the national level, but expressed concern about the repercussions and intimidation that civil society could face. Given that the Committee had simply taken note of the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisals, he wondered what it could do to improve the protection of civil society organizations and strengthen their role in its sessions.

17. **Ms. Dravec** (Slovenia) said that, in September 2017, the Parliament had adopted a new resolution on international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, based on the 2030 Agenda, in which gender equality had remained a top priority. In addition, Slovenia had submitted a written reply to the Committee regarding the implementation of the recommendations provided in the concluding observations during its last review in 2015. Slovenia strongly supported the Convention and its role in comprehensively codifying international legal standards for the human rights of women, but expressed concern about emerging trends to undermine the spirit of the Convention. She would like to hear the observations of the Committee in that regard and how those trends were impacting its work.

18. **Ms. Seppäläinen** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union applauded the Committee's commitment to interacting with the wider human rights framework, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs). She urged States that had not yet done so to become parties to the Convention and ratify the Optional Protocol. Her delegation was pleased to note that several States parties had withdrawn reservations pertaining to specific articles in the Convention and encouraged the withdrawal of any further reservations.

19. The Committee had made efforts to reduce the delay between the submission of reports and their consideration and to make concluding observations more focused, country-specific and user-friendly, thereby improving implementation at the national level. It had also emphasized preventative measures in combating violence against women and girls. It would be helpful to discuss the main features of the evolving global context and the increasingly transnational nature of violence against women and girls, including in online forums. The Committee had also continued to develop its jurisprudence through its work under the Optional Protocol, especially under the inquiry procedure. She would like to hear more about the work on individual communications alleging violations, including possible

measures to increase the impact of the Committee's views on those communications.

20. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that his country remained fully committed to the achievement of gender equality, in both national and international efforts, and the fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention. The previous review had been constructive and insightful, and the United Kingdom valued continued dialogue with Committee members. The Government had extended the territorial application of the Convention to several overseas territories, thereby offering increased protections from discrimination to approximately 72,000 women and girls, and would continue to extend the application of the Convention to its remaining overseas territories and Crown dependencies. He would welcome additional information on the relationship between the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

21. **Mr. Kelly** (Ireland) said that the Committee's reporting and review process was a vital mechanism by which the international community held each State party to account in relation to its human rights record on gender equality and the rights of women and girls. Ireland was firmly committed to that process and to complying with its reporting obligations under the Convention. The Committee had allowed Ireland to submit its report under the simplified reporting procedure, which had resulted in a more focused report. As that pilot programme had come to an end, it would be interesting to learn whether the Committee felt that the simplified reporting procedure improved and facilitated reporting.

22. **Mr. Bastida Peydro** (Spain) said that the national normative framework included initiatives such as a strategic plan for equal opportunities, under which concrete actions were taken to reduce discrimination against women and the resulting inequality that impeded the full enjoyment of their rights. Spain had ratified the Convention in 1984 and had consistently submitted reports and implemented the Committee's recommendations. General recommendation No. 35 was especially relevant in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. He encouraged States that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention and States parties to withdraw any reservations to its articles. Spain prioritized the women and peace and security agenda, as well as the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). He asked how the Committee could collaborate with other United Nations entities, especially UN-Women, to facilitate the implementation of that agenda.

23. **Ms. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that the Committee's reporting process was crucial to assessing the implementation of the Convention and identifying areas for improvement. In the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention (A/72/93), the Committee noted that it had been able to slightly reduce its backlog and had concluded that the consideration of combined reports assisted greatly in managing the backlog. She asked the Chair of the Committee to comment on the overall experience under that approach and how the efficiency of reporting could be further improved.

24. **Ms. Leinarte** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), responding to questions, said that the main problem with the simplified reporting procedure was a lack of diverse and reliable information. The Committee had to prepare a list of issues prior to submission of a report, and therefore had to rely on information received from specialized United Nations agencies, in particular country teams, and from civil society. The Committee had sometimes received little or no information, which had hindered preparation of the list. For that reason, the Committee had decided to suspend the simplified reporting procedure. Nevertheless, it was a powerful tool for constructive dialogue with Member States and would require closer collaboration with UN-Women, which would have a better understanding of the areas that should be addressed.

25. In 2016, the Committee had begun consultations on collaboration between international and regional mechanisms on violence against women. The members of a panel held during the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women had concluded that such collaboration should be institutionalized, and the Secretary-General had given his support. Initiatives could include issuing joint statements on gender, which helped to promote the ratification of various conventions in regions where States were reluctant to do so. There had been some discussion of creating a new convention on violence against women; however, a global implementation plan, developed by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, would be instrumental in making progress in that regard.

26. The Convention provided critical normative standards that were intrinsically linked to the 2030 Agenda, such as those related to non-discrimination, political participation, education, health, food and housing. The Committee's working group on the Sustainable Development Goals had been working closely with UN-Women and the World Bank to develop indicators to allow the Goals to be addressed under all

articles of the Convention and be included in the concluding observations in a way that would help agencies measure progress.

27. **Ms. Šimonović** (Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences) said that she had conducted an official country visit to Australia in February 2017, and visits to the Bahamas and Bulgaria had been planned. She was awaiting a response to the request sent to Canada and had been invited to undertake an official visit to Nepal.

28. Her most recent report (A/HRC/35/30), submitted in June 2017 to the thirty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council, had focused on integrated services and protection measures for women victims of violence and the lack of a human rights-based approach for the provision of shelters and protection orders. Too many States still perceived the provision of those services as a voluntary commitment, rather than a human-rights obligation. She had recommended establishing a global database on shelters and protection orders and collecting data to serve as indicators on violence against women under Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 2.

29. A long-term initiative of her mandate was the establishment of a femicide or gender-related killings observatory. Many NGOs had begun to collect and publish related data. For example, a European Cooperation in Science and Technology Action research project had gathered data across Europe to establish a femicide observatory. The Ombudspersons of Argentina, Croatia and Georgia had established a femicide watch and would publish their data and analysis on the forthcoming International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. She encouraged other States and stakeholders to publish their data as well and hoped that, in the future, the international community would be able to compile comparable data on gender-related killing of women at the global, regional and national levels, which would help prevent predictable deaths in the future.

30. She also sought to establish and strengthen cooperation between independent global and regional monitoring mechanisms on violence against women. In 2016, they had issued a joint statement calling for intensified efforts on combating gender-based violence and support for the establishment of a femicide watch or observatories. Discussions were underway to determine how to institutionalize coordination meetings and panels in order to incorporate them into the regular work of the mechanisms. Given that the new initiative would require additional financial resources and coordinated efforts, she called on all States to support it, including by providing earmarked funds to her mandate. She was also

seeking to establish sustainable cooperation with the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, and called on all of its donors for support. In the past two years, her mandate and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had established formal collaboration. She had participated in drafting general recommendation No. 35 and stood ready to work with Committee members, States and other stakeholders on its full implementation.

31. Introducing her report on the adequacy of the international legal framework on violence against women (A/72/134), she said that opinions had been divided on whether to establish a new stand-alone instrument on violence against women. Some institutions had expressed the view that priority should be accorded to ensuring the full implementation of existing treaties and instruments and had therefore not endorsed the proposal, while others had supported strengthening existing mechanisms and creating an additional optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She had received 291 submissions from civil society organizations and academic institutions, which had been summarized in the report.

32. Those in support of a new stand-alone treaty with a separate monitoring mechanism had argued that it could close the normative gap, provide a legally binding instrument and definition of gender-based violence against women, and generate more political will. Those who proposed strengthening existing instruments but opposed a new stand-alone treaty had argued that it was unnecessary, that political will and resources should instead be directed towards the full implementation of existing international and regional standards, and that the creation of a separate treaty might isolate gender-based violence from the fundamental causes of violence. Those who supported the creation of a new optional protocol under the Convention also supported strengthening existing mechanisms and had suggested that general recommendations No. 19 and No. 35 could be used as a basis for the optional protocol. Other initiatives that had been proposed included the production of a global report on violence against women and the creation of a femicide watch or an international watch centre, which would include annual reports on the implementation by States of their commitments to combat violence against women.

33. The submissions demonstrated that there was growing consensus on the need for action at the global level to address gender-based violence against women more strongly and effectively and to accelerate progress. The normative gap at the international level had recently been addressed by the adoption of general

recommendation No. 35; however, that did not exclude the creation of an optional protocol to the Convention, which could provide a long-term solution to the fact that the Committee's recommendations were not legally binding and strengthen the existing legal framework on violence against women. Nevertheless, that solution would not be sufficient to overcome the significant gaps in the implementation of existing global and regional instruments at the national level, an issue that should be at the forefront of the United Nations agenda.

34. The current international legal framework on gender-based violence was complex and fragmented. Those challenges could be effectively addressed through a global implementation plan on violence against women. Furthermore, an open-ended intergovernmental working group on gender-based violence against women open to all States, NGOs and human rights institutions should be established. She called on Member States to discuss the content of the report and take action to implement its recommendations and urged Governments, civil society and relevant United Nations agencies to begin the process for holding a fifth United Nations World Conference on Women focused on violence against women.

35. **Mr. Burri** (Switzerland) said that efforts should be focused on the effective implementation of existing international standards, obligations and commitments to combat violence against women. States should ratify the relevant instruments and fully implement them without delay. In that regard, the Swiss Parliament had approved the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which would guide national efforts to increase the number of shelters and improve support services for victims. At the regional level, the Convention should allow European States to establish comparable legal standards. Increased collaboration among independent regional and international mechanisms was essential to accelerating the implementation of legal frameworks. He encouraged the Special Rapporteur to work more closely with regional bodies in order to address the challenges posed by inconsistent and fragmented policies and legislation. Given that women's economic empowerment was crucial to the prevention of violence against women, especially domestic violence, he wondered how the Special Rapporteur planned to integrate that topic into her work.

36. **Ms. Seppäläinen** (Observer for the European Union) said that, in September 2017, the European Union and the United Nations had launched a historic spotlight initiative to end violence against women and girls that would support the achievement of the

Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific. As stated in the new European Consensus on Development, the European Union and its member States would work with partners to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination. One of the main challenges in addressing violence against women and girls was that international norms were not fully incorporated and applied at the national level; however, the international legal framework was strengthened by the implementation of regional instruments, such as the Istanbul Convention, which the European Union had signed in June 2017. She asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on her suggestion to hold a fifth World Conference on Women and the added value of its potential outcomes.

37. **Ms. Morton** (Australia) said that the protection of women and girls required better mobilization of the existing human rights architecture. In order to improve coordination efforts, the international community needed to identify synergies between current mechanisms and institutions, as well as between civil society and States. The understanding that violence against women could constitute both discrimination and a violation of their human rights was fundamental to addressing its underlying causes. A human rights-based approach to the issue might therefore help guide efforts to address gaps in the implementation of existing instruments.

38. Investigative, judicial and prosecutorial processes must not revictimize survivors. It was therefore important to build capacity and awareness among law enforcement officials of the impact of gender-based violence. Her delegation supported a more effective use of current treaties and institutions to address violence against women and therefore wished to know how capacity-building and awareness training for law enforcement officials could be supported through those mechanisms.

39. **Ms. Lėkaitė** (Lithuania) said that women could contribute fully to the development of modern societies only if they were free from violence and fear. Her delegation therefore welcomed the examination of violence against women within a broader gender-equality context, as well as the cooperation between the Special Rapporteur and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The lack of a coherent approach and consistent action at the regional and international levels hampered the effective implementation of human rights standards. It would be helpful to discuss the difficulties and challenges that those inconsistencies posed in practice and to hear

suggestions that could be implemented immediately to address that problem.

40. **Ms. Kipiani** (Georgia) said that her country continued to develop comprehensive policies and programmes designed to achieve gender equality, combat violence against women and protect women's rights. In accordance with the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur following her visit in February 2016, Georgia had ratified the Istanbul Convention, which had entered into force in September 2017. Several legislative amendments had been introduced to bring national legislation into compliance with international standards. Pursuant to article 10 of the Convention, an inter-agency commission had been established under the executive branch to serve as a coordination and monitoring mechanism, which focused on human rights, domestic violence and women and peace and security. Georgia attached importance to successful cooperation with United Nations special procedure mandate holders and gave due consideration to their recommendations in implementing its policies.

41. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) said that her delegation wished to know what challenges the Special Rapporteur faced in strengthening cooperation with the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, and what specific recommendations she wished to make in order to enhance her efforts in that regard.

42. With respect to the suggestion that a fifth World Conference on Women should focus on violence against women, her delegation wondered whether the Special Rapporteur had held or planned to hold consultations to determine the priorities of that Conference. The first four Conferences had focused on inclusive issues. Her delegation therefore had reservations about choosing a theme that could be restrictive and instead recommended choosing one that would incorporate all dimensions of the advancement of women.

43. **Ms. Naur** (Estonia) said that the Internet, and technology in general, played a crucial and beneficial role for the Government, private businesses and citizens in Estonia. Nevertheless, technological advances had created new challenges, such as virtual violence, online harassment, cyberbullying and cyberstalking. When reviewing the adequacy of the legal framework on violence against women, more attention should be paid to the role of the Internet and technology. Furthermore, any new legal instrument or working group should leverage technology to better map, report and measure violence against women and to provide an informational platform for all actors involved. It would be interesting to hear the views of the Special Rapporteur on whether the international community should be discussing the

technological framework in parallel with the legal one, in particular, the ways in which the Internet was contributing to violence and how that powerful tool could be used to combat gender-based violence at the national, regional and international levels.

44. **Ms. Dravec** (Slovenia) said that amendments to the Domestic Violence Prevention Act had been adopted in 2016 to improve existing preventive and protection measures, including a new six-year programme to prevent domestic violence and violence against women and children. In March 2017, the legislation governing law enforcement operations had been amended to extend restraining orders for domestic violence perpetrators, allow the use of information collected by NGOs in police investigations, strengthen cooperation between institutions and civil society to assist victims, and facilitate better data collection and statistical data analysis. Furthermore, the Government had initiated a multi-year project to address cyberviolence, raise awareness and improve the knowledge and response of relevant institutions, including schools, law enforcement, the justice system and the media. Her delegation would welcome additional examples of good practices in building cooperation and synergy among regional and international mechanisms.

45. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that, in order to strengthen efforts to combat violence against women and girls, the Foreign Secretary had recently appointed a special envoy on gender equality, who would be willing to engage with any relevant stakeholder wishing to collaborate on the issue. Gender equality was the responsibility of all individuals and societies, and its promotion required active contributions and input from women, men, girls and boys. More attention should be paid to the ways in which men and boys were involved in the achievement of gender equality, as well as the positive impact that it had on their lives. He would like to know what actions the Special Rapporteur was undertaking to engage men and boys in combating gender inequality and ending the harmful practices that continued to hold women back and negatively impact the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

46. **Ms. Moreira Costa Pittella** (Brazil) said that violence against women should be considered a form of discrimination against women and girls and a human rights violation. Given that the current legal framework was complex and fragmented, the proposal to establish an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be further analysed. States must enhance cooperation on data collection and be aware of indicators for femicide, shelters and protection orders. In that regard, the proposal to establish a femicide watch

was particularly pertinent. Efforts must be combined to collect, analyse and review data on femicide at the national, regional and international levels, and Brazil would welcome further international cooperation in that regard. She wondered what results were expected from a fifth World Conference on Women.

47. **Ms. Abushawesh** (Observer for Palestine) said that the Special Rapporteur had visited Israel and the occupied State of Palestine in September 2016. In her report on the mission to the occupied State of Palestine ([A/HRC/35/30/Add.2](#)), the Special Rapporteur had stated that protracted conflict and prolonged occupation punctuated by frequent incidents of violence and the absence of any prospect of peace created a growing despair and hopelessness among the population. Despite those obstacles, the State of Palestine was making significant efforts to protect and empower Palestinian women. A national observatory on violence against women had been launched in May 2017 with a view to guiding decision-makers in making the necessary changes to laws and policies to protect women. Nevertheless, the unbearable gendered impact on Palestinian women and girls living under the 50-year occupation continued to worsen daily, impeding the Government's efforts. In the report on the mission to Israel ([A/HRC/35/30/Add.1](#)), the Special Rapporteur had renewed the call for Israel to end the occupation and conflict and to promptly address the occupation's gendered impact in line with the State's obligations under human rights and humanitarian law. She would like to know whether follow-up discussions with Israel had provided any indication that it would heed those calls.

48. **Mr. Nielsen** (Denmark) said that systematic gender inequality, discrimination and unequal power relations were recognized as the root causes of violence against women and must be addressed. Furthermore, health-care services should be responsive to trauma and include timely and comprehensive sexual, reproductive and mental health services. A number of States had introduced national laws designed to address gender-based violence against women, and he wondered what actions those States could take to bridge the remaining implementation gaps. The report of the Special Rapporteur did not address child, early and forced marriage, which was a widespread practice of violence perpetrated against children and adolescent girls. He therefore asked the Special Rapporteur to suggest concrete actions that could be taken to eliminate that practice.

49. **Mr. Jelinski** (Canada) said that Canada maintained a standing invitation to all United Nations special procedure mandate holders and was committed

to opening its human rights performance to international scrutiny. Two visits had been conducted in 2016, and Canada was working to respond to several requests, including one from the Special Rapporteur.

50. In order to address gaps in the legal framework, the Government had recently announced a strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence, which laid the foundation for coordinated action to improve the State's overall response across three pillars: prevention, support for survivors and families, and the promotion of responsive legal and justice systems. In the spirit of reconciliation with indigenous peoples, the strategy put forward a range of actions to address violence against indigenous women and girls. Furthermore, the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was under way. He would welcome additional examples of the fragmented and sometimes convoluted implementation of the current legal framework at the national and regional levels, as well as suggestions to address that challenge.

51. **Mr. Bastida Peydro** (Spain) said that the Government had recently approved a national compact on gender-based violence, which set out more than 200 concrete actions and had received a budget allocation of 1 billion euros. Spain had joined the global initiative Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, currently under the leadership of the European Union. Furthermore, Spain supported the circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations created by the Secretary-General. The Spanish system for collecting and revising data on gender-based violence was one of the cornerstones of the national action framework. As a result, Spain was participating in the Eurostat task force established to design a survey on violence against women.

52. Violence against women was one of the main obstacles to socioeconomic development, as it hindered women's participation. Spain focused on that connection within its international development cooperation framework. He would welcome further details on the possible establishment of a global action plan on violence against women and its coordination with the 2030 Agenda.

53. **Ms. Simpson** (United States of America) said that the considerable efforts needed to create a new convention would divert scarce resources away from strengthening and implementing existing mechanisms. Moreover, preparing a new convention would give those less sympathetic to gender equality and women's empowerment an opportunity to scale back their commitments under existing instruments. The United

States agreed with several aspects of the report, including the importance of supporting women human rights defenders, eliminating discriminatory laws and practices, formulating national strategies to address violence against women, collecting data to determine the nature and extent of the problem and examining implementation gaps under Sustainable Development Goal 5. Some recommendations did not enjoy universal agreement, including granting reparations to survivors of violence, establishing a femicide watch and holding a fifth World Conference on Women. She asked the Special Rapporteur to provide further details on the normative gaps in the existing international legal framework referenced in the report.

54. **Ms. Loe** (Norway) said that the Commission on the Status of Women, at its forthcoming session, would focus on rural women and girls, who could face a greater risk of violence for structural reasons, such as a lack of economic resources and negative social norms. In rural areas, services for survivors were sometimes not available or easily accessible. She wished to know which issues the Commission should prioritize in relation to violence against rural women and girls.

55. The Government of Norway was currently preparing a strategy to counter online violence, which seemed to be on the rise and impacting girls in particular. She asked the Special Rapporteur to identify the main challenges for women and girls in terms of online violence and how they differed from both online violence against men and boys and other forms of violence against women.

56. **Mr. Ellinger** (Czechia) said that the Czech Republic was making steady progress in the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, which it had signed in May 2016. His delegation wished to acknowledge the work of women civil society organizations in challenging social stereotypes and inequalities as the root causes of violence against women, and he echoed the call for training sessions, awareness-raising campaigns and capacity-building programmes designed to promote an understanding of gender-based violence for law enforcement officials, social workers and medical professionals. He would welcome additional information on the establishment of a femicide watch as a tool to strengthen preventive measures.

57. **Ms. Razana** (Maldives) said that her country supported the call for a global implementation plan on violence against women, as highlighted in the report of the Special Rapporteur. The Government had made significant progress in strengthening its legal framework to bring an end to violence against women, but legislative measures alone had not been sufficient. It

would therefore continue to research the underlying factors in order to better understand the behavioural change necessary and develop more targeted communication strategies and campaigns. A culture of gender empowerment must be cultivated in order to reap the full benefit of legislation. She requested additional information about the working methodology, in particular the reporting mechanisms for the proposed open-ended working group.

58. **Ms. Šimonović** (Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences), responding to questions, said that it was important to see the international community increase support for regional human rights mechanisms designed to address violence against women while continuing to uphold the international framework. The Istanbul Convention, for example, provided more detailed guidance for some aspects of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Greater linkages were needed between regional and global instruments. When she had served on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, it had never received data collected under regional instruments, but combined data of that kind could contribute more strongly to the elimination of violence against women.

59. She hoped that the spotlight initiative, created by the European Union and the United Nations, would include a strong women's human rights perspective and integrate regional and international mechanisms. The initiative was intended to address different issues in its five target regions; however, it was important to have comparable data from all parts of the world in order to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies. States that opposed the idea of a femicide watch should nevertheless find some way to collect data on gender-related killings in order to prevent them. For example, in the United States, the State of Minnesota extracted femicide data from homicide data.

60. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, there had been much discussion on the effectiveness of the implementation of its outcome. In 2020, there would be a review of the achievements made in gender equality. A fifth World Conference on Women could allow the international community to evaluate implementation strategies and determine what had been successful in order to develop targeted strategies for areas such as shelters, protection orders and law enforcement. At the United Nations, everyone was familiar with the treaties and agendas, but better education was needed at the national level. For example, students were not learning about the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women or other international instruments, and judges were not receiving related training. The international community must find a way to ensure that the case law and jurisprudence developed at the United Nations was being disseminated at the national level. Her next report would address online violence against women, as it was important to determine whether national laws were covering new forms of violence, such as cyberviolence. She encouraged Member States and other stakeholders to share examples of good laws and practices.

61. The number of States that had adopted laws on violence against women and domestic laws was growing, but remained insufficient. Moreover, those laws must be complemented by provisions in penal and criminal procedure codes, as well as legislation governing social issues. A comprehensive and holistic approach was needed. There must be cooperation among agencies and NGOs, as well as between the police and public prosecutors. She had called for the creation of an intergovernmental working group, but it was up to Member States to determine how to proceed and identify the key issues. General recommendation No. 35 was a significant step in the right direction, and the international community must now develop implementation strategies. That work could be done under a global implementation action plan on violence against women and a possible fifth World Conference on Women.

62. **Mr. García Paz y Miño** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to address the low representation of women at senior levels, improve monitoring and accountability and standardize gender-related policies within the United Nations system. It supported accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The international community must collaborate to translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into tangible benefits. As a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal and a cross-cutting issue in all other Goals, gender equality and women's empowerment required sufficient funding, implementation and follow-up at all levels. Inequalities remained in labour force participation and leadership, income, pensions and working conditions. Many women still lacked access to justice, basic health care, education, social protection and other services that supported their ability to generate income, particularly in rural areas.

63. An important factor for the advancement of women was an environment that maintained world peace and promoted and protected human rights, democracy and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The international community must also take all necessary

steps to prevent, address and eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, especially femicide, and ensure that women belonging to vulnerable groups were not subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination. Furthermore, climate change and natural disasters, which posed a challenge to the achievement of sustainable development, disproportionately affected women and girls. Women should participate in decision-making processes at all levels in order to contribute their knowledge and expertise in disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

64. Specific actions were needed to further mainstream the gender perspective in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies. Men and boys should be engaged in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. He called for gender-responsive budgeting initiatives and supported strengthening the political participation of women and their role in promoting peace and security. The Group looked forward to increasing international cooperation and global partnership for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, including the fulfilment of commitments on official development assistance, debt relief, market access, financial and technical support and capacity-building in order to improve access to education, health care, science and technology for women and girls.

65. **Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that Governments and the public and private sectors had continued to make significant advances in gender equality and women's empowerment, but various challenges persisted, including violence against women and girls, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, exclusion from economic opportunities, legal impediments to land ownership and inheritance, and access to maternal health services. Rural women still lacked access to electricity and safe drinking water and sanitation, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Women farmers were less able to access land, credit, agricultural inputs, markets and high-value agrifood chains, and they obtained lower prices for their crops.

66. The elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls would promote their well-being and ensure their full participation in and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Violence against women impeded socioeconomic development and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. States should improve and expand girls' education at all levels and encourage women to enter employment as a means of achieving gender equality and empowerment, and developing their self-esteem.

Significant achievements had been made in protecting and promoting women's rights in the workplace. Nevertheless, as in many parts of the world, gender inequalities and discriminatory practices were still prevalent, such as sexual harassment, gender wage gaps, a lack of maternity protection and unequal access to opportunities. Additionally, a lack of access to quality education and resources for self-empowerment, as well as unpaid care and domestic work, consumed women's time and propelled them towards lower-paying jobs.

67. The Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the New Partnership for Africa's Development provided the basis for Governments to work towards advancing the status and rights of women in their respective States. In 2015, the African Union had adopted the Declaration on 2015 Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063, in which States committed to helping women develop technical and entrepreneurial skills, increasing direct funding, and challenging financial institutions to observe a minimum quota of 50 per cent for women entrepreneurs when providing finance for business expansion. The Group called for active collaboration and partnerships with international financial, technical, professional and specialized institutions to help strengthen the entrepreneurial and leadership skills of African women. The fourth African Union high-level panel on gender equality and women's empowerment, held in June 2017, had focused on harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth, with particular emphasis on empowering young women and girls.

68. In collaboration with UN-Women and the Government of Germany, the African Union Commission had recently launched an African women leaders network in order to benefit from women's experience and leadership in governance, peace and security. The network's action plan reinforced the need to create a fund to support capacity-building for women and young girls through education and improvements to the educational infrastructure. In addition, a gender perspective had been incorporated in the African peace and security agenda, in order to strengthen women's participation in peace, security and post-conflict reconstruction and improve the effectiveness of institutions focused on the protection of women and children in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

69. **Mr. Regis** (Haiti), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the social and economic status of women in the Caribbean had improved. The 2016 Caribbean Human Development Report had noted that higher numbers of women were completing secondary education, which had increased

women's participation in the workforce and reduced the gender pay gap. According to the World Health Organization, there had been improvements in maternal health services, with a large percentage of women having access to facilities and qualified personnel. In addition, States members of CARICOM had achieved gender parity among their permanent representatives to the United Nations.

70. Despite those advances, many forms of discrimination persisted. Rural women faced greater challenges than men owing to cultural norms, security issues and a lack of identification documents. According to the Inter-American Commission of Women, rural women in a majority of Latin American and Caribbean States faced challenges such as limited access to land, credit, loans, health care, education and housing. As at 2012, rural women had represented a large part of the Caribbean agricultural labour force, including 50 per cent in Barbados. Meeting the needs of rural women and girls was therefore essential to ensuring the sustainability of development gains in the Caribbean. In collaboration with UN-Women, CARICOM had undertaken public awareness campaigns to highlight issues facing women in the region.

71. According to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, illegal migration, including trafficking in women, had increased in the Caribbean. Poor and vulnerable women were often victims of international criminal networks and sexually exploited in the tourism industry. As a result, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines had enacted legislation to combat human trafficking. Guyana, in addition to the Bahamas, had been included in Tier 1 of the 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report of the United States Department of State, as a State meeting the minimum standards of the United States Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

72. The growing demand for a qualified workforce in developed countries had resulted in an exodus of professionals from the Caribbean, in particular women working in health and education. Nevertheless, migrants also contributed to the development of their countries of origin through remittances, which promoted economic activity and contributed to the gross domestic product. CARICOM member States continued to collaborate actively with the International Organization for Migration on projects to encourage diasporas to leverage the available human and financial resources. Despite the related challenges, CARICOM felt that the movement of people must be regarded as positive and therefore commended States that had taken steps at the national, regional and international levels to combat

violence against migrant workers and promote their human rights. The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration would provide a unique opportunity to develop international governance for migration and protect migrant women and girls from violence and exploitation.

73. CARICOM thanked the United Nations for its continued role in development assistance to its member States and highlighted the contributions made by civil society partners, including NGOs and women in community organizations. The Community encouraged increased investments to fill the gaps in resources, in particular by mobilizing financial resources and prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment in official development assistance. In that way, small States could ensure that official development assistance was used efficiently for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its 12 critical areas of concern. The Caribbean States were sometimes limited by unique circumstances, as demonstrated by the recent deadly hurricane season, which forced them to reallocate their budgets.

74. **Mr. Chandrtri** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that, according to the World Bank, Southeast Asia was one of the world's fastest-growing markets and would likely continue to expand. Women contributed significantly to the economy and played an essential role in sustaining growth, as States with an increased participation of women in the workforce registered higher economic growth. According to a survey by UN-Women, the female labour force participation rate in East Asia and the Pacific had reached 62 per cent in some States. However, the gender pay gap remained at 42 per cent in Southeast Asia, as compared to 24 per cent worldwide.

75. Gender equality had been a priority since the adoption of the Declaration on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region in 1988. Several regional instruments had been endorsed to promote women's rights and empowerment, including the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The Association made use of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and commitments set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action when establishing regional mechanisms and enhancing cooperation to address structural gender inequality in the region. The Association had been working in partnership with UN-Women and the World Bank on its agenda to promote women's economic empowerment

while making progress on several of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth and Goal 10 on reducing inequality. The ASEAN Community Vision 2025 laid out the roadmap for mainstreaming gender and implementing gender-responsive policies. The work plan of the ASEAN Committee on Women, which sought to advance women's rights and gender equality through regional cooperation, focused on women's leadership, violence against women, women's economic empowerment and the protection of vulnerable women.

76. Furthermore, the ASEAN women's entrepreneur network empowered women in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to benefit from new technology and the digital economy. The network and the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organization were collaborating with the UN-Women regional office and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to promote the role of women entrepreneurs, focusing on the impact of the private sector in women's economic empowerment and strategies to leverage information and communications technology. Additionally, ASEAN planned to enhance cooperation among its bodies focused on gender issues and strengthen partnerships with global and regional stakeholders, including UN-Women. The Association would strive to address the remaining gender equality challenges in the region and would continue to promote gender mainstreaming; women's participation; equal opportunities in economic, social and political life; and access to education and vocational training.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.