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Chair: Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania)
later: Ms. Millicay (Vice-Chair). (Argentina)
later: Mr. Pašić (Vice-Chair) (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

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

Agenda item 82: The rule of law at the national and international levels (*continued*) (A/68/213/Add.1 and A/69/181)

1. **Ms. Guillén-Grillo** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that in the Santiago Declaration adopted at the first CELAC summit in January 2013, as well as in the Havana Declaration adopted at its second summit, the members of the Community had reiterated their respect for international law; peaceful settlement of disputes and prohibition of the threat or use of force; respect for the self-determination of peoples under colonial domination and foreign occupation and for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States; protection and promotion of human rights; national and international rule of law; and democracy. They had also pledged to work together for the sake of prosperity for all, with a view to eradicating discrimination, inequalities, exclusion, human rights violations and transgressions against the rule of law. The CELAC countries were determined to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

2. Respect for the rule of law at the international level implied compliance with existing international norms and acknowledgement that the rule of law applied equally to all States and to international organizations, including the United Nations and its principal organs. It was the obligation of States to settle their international disputes by peaceful means of their choice and with due regard for the relevant General Assembly resolutions. CELAC was convinced that peace and security at the international level were fundamental for strengthening the rule of law. Full implementation of the obligations set forth in the Charter and in other international instruments was central to collective efforts to maintain international peace and security, effectively address emerging threats and ensure accountability for international crimes.

3. CELAC stressed the importance of continuing efforts to revitalize the General Assembly, strengthen the Economic and Social Council and reform the Security Council in order to render them more effective, democratic, representative and transparent

organs. It also underlined the importance of reform of the governance structures, quotas and voting rights of the Bretton Woods institutions in order to enhance their effectiveness, credibility, accountability and legitimacy.

4. CELAC was committed to strengthening and promoting the rule of law at the national level through dialogue, cooperation and solidarity among its members. Mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean had played a significant role in that regard. The Community recognized the importance of national ownership in rule of law activities and the need to ensure the existence of a transparent legal system accessible to all, solid democratic institutions and laws, independent and impartial judicial systems and adequate redress mechanisms for human rights violations in order to provide a framework for political and social development. It also recognized the necessary link between the rule of law at the international and national levels.

5. CELAC strongly urged States to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter that impeded the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries. Strengthening the rule of law was not an exclusive concern of certain countries or regions, but a global aspiration to be governed by agreed values, principles and norms and created through open, predictable and recognized processes that took into account national perspectives. The Community welcomed United Nations activities aimed at strengthening the rule of law, but noted that there was room for improvement in order to avoid duplication and increase efficiency in the Organization's activities. The assistance provided by the United Nations should be broad in scope, covering also challenges relating to economic growth, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

6. The rule of law and development were strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Advancement of the rule of law at the national and international levels was essential for sustained and inclusive economic growth, sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and hunger and the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development — all of which in turn reinforced the rule of law. In that connection, CELAC

acknowledged the inclusion of access to justice for all among the proposed goals and targets presented in the report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970). That outcome document should be the basis for integrating the sustainable development goals in the new development agenda and should not be renegotiated. In the light of the subtopic for the Committee's debate, "Sharing States' national practices in strengthening the rule of law through access to justice", CELAC reaffirmed the principle of good governance and stressed its commitment to an effective, just, non-discriminatory and equitable delivery of public services pertaining to the rule of law, including criminal, civil and administrative justice, and commercial dispute settlement. The independence, impartiality and integrity of the judicial system were essential prerequisites for upholding the rule of law and preventing discrimination in the administration of justice.

7. **Mr. Marhic** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union and its member States remained committed to giving effect to the right of equal access to justice for all. The European Union Justice Programme for the period 2014-2020 provided funding for schemes that aimed to help create a European area of justice, based on mutual trust. The European Union also gave priority to rule of law issues in its relations with candidate countries, including through structured dialogue and targeted financial support.

8. The European Union and its member States welcomed the Organization's efforts to ensure a strategic approach to its broader rule of law work, including the critical work carried out by the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group. They also welcomed the progress made in operationalizing the global focal point arrangement, and the many actions undertaken by various United Nations entities, as well as such organizations as the International Development Law Organization, to promote access to justice for all. Support for the provision of mobile legal aid clinics, mobile courts, and accessible legal services in rural and remote areas, among other actions, represented

significant tools for people's legal empowerment, and must be continued in a sustainable way.

9. Through its financial instruments, the European Union was providing rule of law assistance, particularly with regard to access to justice, through such initiatives as the European justice support programmes being implemented in Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, the Philippines and Tunisia, among other countries. Those programmes were complemented by multilateral and bilateral assistance provided by the States members of the European Union. Many civilian crisis management operations conducted by the European Union also focused on the rule of law.

10. At the high-level event of the General Assembly on the contributions of human rights and the rule of law in the post-2015 development agenda, held in June 2014, States Members of the United Nations had repeatedly emphasized that the rule of law, including access to justice, was fundamental to tackling root causes of poverty and violence. Respect for the rule of law was an essential condition for peace, stability and development and should be pursued at both national and international levels. It was also inextricably linked to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The United Nations should continue to promote the rule of law as a principle of governance that was equally important in all societies. In the proposal of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals, the European Union would have welcomed stronger language on the rule of law, a concept that must be included in the post-2015 development agenda. The new agenda should address issues related to democratic governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights, equality and equity. Rule of law goals and targets were measurable, since adherence to the rule of law could be assessed by examining such aspects as access to justice and the capacity of justice sector institutions.

11. Judicial institutions played a critical role in establishing and upholding peace and security and protecting human rights. It was essential to ensure accountability for the most serious crimes of international concern. In that regard, the European Union advocated an effective and efficient interplay between national justice systems and the International Criminal Court, in accordance with the principle of complementarity and bearing in mind the importance of international cooperation and judicial assistance. It

was a firm supporter of the International Criminal Court and other international criminal tribunals and welcomed in particular the recent verdict rendered by the Judges of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. Their conviction of two former leaders of Democratic Kampuchea was an important step towards ending impunity, as it demonstrated that political leaders could be held accountable for their acts even decades after those acts had been committed.

12. The General Assembly should consider ways of strengthening the linkages between the rule of law, human rights, peace and security, and development, as addressed in section VIII of the addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities submitted at the previous session (A/68/213/Add.1). In each of the areas covered by the declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the rule of law at the national and international levels, the European Union and its Member States had made substantive pledges, backed up by concrete measures, aimed at strengthening the rule of law. The European Union encouraged further pledges and their fulfilment by Member States.

13. **Ms. Valjento** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), said that the United Nations played a valuable role in the codification and progressive development of international law and should intensify its efforts to promote norms, standards and practices relating to the rule of law. The Nordic countries strongly supported the work of the international courts and tribunals and called on those Member States that had not already done so to consider accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

14. Current crises, involving major international crimes, had highlighted the need for enhanced international efforts to strengthen the international criminal justice system. In that regard, the United Nations should deepen its cooperation with the International Criminal Court, which had a key role to play in ensuring accountability when violations were not addressed at the national level. Another important tool was the Justice Rapid Response initiative, which offered high-quality assistance and expertise to national Governments for the investigation and prosecution of atrocity crimes.

15. Conflicts clearly had an impact on various aspects of development. The responsibility to protect was a key means of preventing and addressing conflict; inter alia, it provided a broad policy agenda for early warning and assistance. The Secretary-General's "Rights up Front" initiative was also a valuable mechanism for responding more effectively to the risk of serious violations of human rights or humanitarian law.

16. Notwithstanding the continued atrocities committed by terrorist groups, it was important to ensure that all counter-terrorism activities were consistent with human rights and the rule of law. Failure to meet such standards might reduce the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts and even contribute to increased radicalization.

17. In view of the linkages between the rule of law and the three main pillars of the United Nations, namely peace and security, human rights, and development, the Nordic countries welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to enhance coordination and coherence in rule of law issues across the United Nations system, both at Headquarters and at country levels. A comprehensive approach involving both the United Nations and its Member States was needed to strengthen the rule of law at the national and international levels. For that reason, the Organization should engage in broad and cross-cutting discussion as a follow-up to the high-level meeting on the rule of law, with the participation of other stakeholders. A forward-looking strategy or plan of action could be agreed upon to achieve common goals and the implementation of pledges should be monitored.

18. The Nordic countries firmly adhered to the core principles of the rule of law: legality, equality, accountability and participation. Full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms was a central component of a society based on the rule of law, in which everyone was equal before the law and entitled to equal protection by the law without discrimination. Good governance was delivered by working democratic institutions and mechanisms for broad participation in decision-making processes at all levels. An independent and efficient court system was a basic requirement of the rule of law to ensure the fair adjudication of legal disputes and effective remedies, particularly in cases of human rights violations. Separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judicial branches guaranteed the independence of the judiciary; the integrity of the judiciary and law

enforcement and prosecutorial bodies must also be ensured. United Nations support for constitution drafting and legal reforms at the country level was crucial in that regard.

19. Strengthening the rule of law and access to justice would foster an enabling environment for sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. Adequate and solid legal frameworks were also needed to boost entrepreneurship and investment. Since the rule of law and development were closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing, the rule of law should be included in the post-2015 development agenda as a separate goal. Ensuring access to legal identity for all persons was an important first step in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all, and building effective and accountable institutions.

20. The Nordic countries attached great importance to the equal rights of men and women to participate fully in decision-making, justice and governance institutions. Civil society also played an essential role in advancing the rule of law at the national and international levels, in the areas of awareness-raising, fact-finding, advocacy, facilitation of dialogue, and provision of assistance to victims. The United Nations must therefore continue to cooperate closely with other stakeholders in promoting the rule of law and access to justice.

21. **Mr. Spresov** (Belarus) said that the rule of law was closely linked not only to sustainable development but also to many other important issues on the international agenda. However, such linkages should not be used to politicize or erode the concept of the rule of law on the pretext that it was a cross-cutting issue. The Organization's priority should be to restore and maintain the balance between the international and national aspects of the rule of law. Bearing in mind that issues relating to the rule of law at the national level were a classic example of matters within the domestic jurisdiction of States, pursuant to Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter, his delegation called on the United Nations to focus on promoting and strengthening the rule of law at the international level.

22. To ensure the rule of law, States must comply strictly with their international obligations, and international organizations with the mandates established in their founding documents, in accordance with international law. His delegation had consistently

advocated the development of a clear conceptual framework containing an unambiguous and consensual definition of the rule of law. Such work was needed before further practical measures were taken. The United Nations Secretariat should be more active in putting forward proposals to deal with acts undermining the international legal order, such as unilateral measures of coercion or violations of international privileges and immunities. A clear distinction should be drawn between the rule of law and other related concepts such as human rights and access to justice.

23. With regard to the subtopic for the Committee's debate, it should be stressed that the United Nations could support efforts to ensure the rule of law at the national level only if States consented to the provision of such assistance. Technical assistance should be provided upon request, on a non-discriminatory basis, to support States' efforts to ensure compliance with their international legal obligations and develop their legislative, judicial and law enforcement systems by harmonizing best practices based on universal legal values with the specificities of national legal institutions, including in the context of shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

24. **Ms. O'Brien** (Australia) said that the rule of law was the best guarantee of the freedom and dignity of all people. The international criminal justice system played an important role in preventing impunity, limiting historical revisionism and upholding the rule of law. Accountability mechanisms that brought justice to victims of mass atrocity crimes could help establish an inclusive and lasting peace. Her delegation therefore supported the mandates of the relevant ad hoc courts and tribunals. The guilty verdicts delivered by the Trial Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia against two former Khmer Rouge leaders for crimes against humanity constituted a significant milestone.

25. Australia encouraged all States that had not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and urged States parties to the Statute to demonstrate their political and diplomatic support for the Court by fulfilling their cooperation obligations. States that were the subject of Security Council referrals to the Prosecutor should also cooperate with the Court. Furthermore, Australia encouraged all Member States that had not yet done so

to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

26. The United Nations had a critical role to play in ensuring effective and accountable governance at the international level, particularly in the areas of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the designation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Development Programme as the joint global focal point for police, justice and corrections and hoped that the mechanism would improve the coordination and effectiveness of the Organization's rule of law efforts. United Nations peacekeeping missions should be given sufficient authority, clarity and direction to perform their rule of law mandates, and such mandates should be given appropriate priority within missions. Successful rule of law interventions conducted in partnership with the host State could significantly reduce the likelihood of the outbreak or resumption of conflict, and of mass atrocity crimes.

27. Australia was helping to build effective law and justice systems in its own region and elsewhere, and had learned from experience that national ownership and leadership were vital for the success of such initiatives. Access to justice for individuals and communities was particularly important, as it built trust in national institutions and encouraged the peaceful settlement of disputes. In Indonesia, her Government was working in partnership with the national authorities to launch the country's first publicly funded, national legal aid system. In Papua New Guinea, it was providing support for infrastructure to increase access to law and justice services in the provinces. In addition, Australian Government officials were advising national counterparts on how to strengthen key agencies, for example, through the establishment of the Family and Sexual Offences Unit in the Papua New Guinea Office of the Public Prosecutor. In Cambodia, her Government had invested in research into the prevalence of violence against women, including those with a disability, which had already led to the design of programmes that took account of local women's needs.

28. Law and justice institutions were important for sustainable development; in particular, predictable and credible property rights, community safety, and non-violent dispute resolution were essential for building vibrant communities. The post-2015 development agenda should focus on creating peaceful,

inclusive societies and effective institutions, based on the principles of equality, transparency and accountability.

29. **Ms. Dieguez La O** (Cuba) said that her Government reiterated its commitment to promoting the rule of law in the true sense, which would enable the current unjust international order to be transformed. The process must begin with a reformed United Nations that would set the standard for transparency, democracy and participation of the entire international community in the resolution of pressing global problems. The reforms should strengthen the central role of the General Assembly, the only organ with universal membership. As indicated in paragraph 36 of the declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the rule of law at the national and international levels (General Assembly resolution 67/1), true rule of law also entailed democratizing the international economic, monetary and financial organizations, to place them at the service of the development of peoples, rather than the enrichment of a few. It would also require a thoroughgoing reform of the Security Council to make it an inclusive, transparent and democratic organ that reflected the genuine interests of the international community. Her delegation reserved its position on paragraph 28 of the declaration on the rule of law, since it did not support the assertion that the Security Council had made a positive contribution to the rule of law. That organ and some of its members openly violated international law and even the Council's own decisions in order to impose their political agenda and military domination on developing countries.

30. Sovereign equality, compliance with obligations in good faith, peaceful settlement of disputes, refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and non-selectivity should be the basic principles governing the actions of States at all times. Any attempt to supplant or replace national authorities, including activities to foment internal conflicts in order to impose external agendas, was unjustified. Promotion of the rule of law must take as its point of departure respect for the legal institutions of all States and recognition of the sovereign right of peoples to establish the legal and democratic institutions most appropriate to their sociopolitical and cultural interests. Work to strengthen national legal systems must be

undertaken only at the request of the State concerned, without any political conditions and with due respect for the State's right to self-determination.

31. Her delegation had noted with concern intentions to impose a manipulated concept of the rule of law and establish a follow-up mechanism independent of the Sixth Committee; it rejected any attempt to politicize the item on the pretext that it was a cross-cutting issue. The delegations in the Sixth Committee represented the entire membership of the Organization and were fully competent to deal with the matter.

32. With regard to the addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities submitted at the previous session (A/68/213/Add.1), an appropriate balance had not been maintained between the rule of law at the national and international levels. As an international organization, the United Nations should focus on the promotion of the rule of law at the international level. The addendum's bias towards the national level could give rise to interventionist interpretations and violation of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Furthermore, the assertion in paragraph 42 that States marked by weak rule of law and a failure to respect human rights posed significant threats to peace and security was based on partial, selective concepts highly subject to manipulation. It was unclear who, under what parameters and with what authority, would decide which States were marked by weak rule of law and which were not. Paragraph 43 of the addendum referred to the responsibility to protect as a principle adopted by the General Assembly in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1). However, paragraph 139 of that resolution stressed the need for the Assembly to continue consideration of the principle, thereby indicating that its scope and content had not yet been defined or agreed upon. Her delegation noted with concern such attempts to treat the rule of law as a cross-cutting issue and link it to other concepts that had not been endorsed by the international community.

33. It was also problematic that the addendum did not refer to the rule of law at the international level as a factor contributing to poverty reduction through the promotion of fair and equitable trade between countries, but instead took a biased and incomplete approach by attributing poverty solely to disempowerment, exclusion and discrimination and

thereby ignoring underdevelopment, unequal distribution of wealth, the impact of the international environment and the arbitrary international financial system. Lastly, some of the initiatives proposed in chapter VIII of the addendum exceeded the mandate conferred on the Secretary-General by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/1. The Sixth Committee was the competent forum for analysis and discussion of the concept of the rule of law; there was no mandate to transfer that agenda item to any other body.

34. True rule of law required the renunciation of unilateral acts, including the application of extraterritorial laws or the politically motivated exercise of jurisdiction. In that regard, Cuba demanded the immediate lifting of all the extraterritorial provisions constituting the economic, financial and trade embargo imposed by the United States of America on Cuba for over 50 years.

35. **Mr. Barriga** (Liechtenstein) said that his delegation welcomed the reflection of many important elements of the rule of law, including access to justice, equality and non-discrimination, anti-corruption and good governance, in the proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. It was, however, surprising that the Open Working Group had not been able to agree on the inclusion of the term "rule of law" in the title of proposed goal 16, which currently referred only to "access to justice". Since the agreed subtopic for the Committee's debate at the current session, "Sharing States' national practices in strengthening the rule of law through access to justice", clearly confirmed that access to justice was but one aspect of the rule of law, it was to be hoped that the inconsistency could be corrected in the course of the remaining work on the post-2015 development agenda. The promotion of the rule of law was an enabler, as well as an outcome, of sustainable development.

36. The greater the grievance, the greater the importance of access to justice. Yet combating impunity for the most serious crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression, was particularly challenging. Such crimes were usually committed in situations where a State's internal justice system had broken down; in some cases they were perpetrated by the very leaders responsible for protecting the civilian population. While the principle of complementarity enshrined in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was a

sensible approach for addressing such dynamics, experience had shown that efforts must also be redoubled to strengthen the capacity of domestic justice systems, particularly since the Court could try only a small number of perpetrators or might not have jurisdiction in a given case. Various United Nations entities, bilateral donors and other actors, including the International Development Law Organization and the Open Society Foundations, were making important contributions in that regard. Particular emphasis should be placed on ensuring access to justice for those who often faced particular obstacles in obtaining it, such as women, migrants and persons with disabilities.

37. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that stakeholders other than State representatives should be included in discussions on the rule of law; otherwise, important perspectives would inevitably be missed. Informal arrangements would be best suited for such discussions. His delegation also generally agreed with the other recommendations for strengthening the linkages between the rule of law, human rights, peace and security and development, contained in the addendum to the previous year's report of the Secretary-General ([A/68/213/Add.1](#)). In particular, it would welcome his suggestions regarding rule of law areas that needed to be further elaborated. One such area was the right to privacy in a digital age, an issue that clearly demonstrated the cross-cutting nature of the rule of law. While that topic was currently under consideration by the Third Committee, it should also be taken up by the Sixth Committee.

38. **Ms. Morris-Sharma** (Singapore) said that Singapore was founded on the rule of law, a concept that was key to its progress as a democratic society anchored on justice and equality. Her delegation had thus supported a stand-alone goal on the rule of law in the post-2015 development agenda. A symposium to explore how different components of the rule of law influenced economic progress, social development and political stability had been held in Singapore in May 2014. While no simple or universally agreed definition existed, it was important to identify at least the common elements of how the concept of the rule of law was understood. Her Government was committed to the rule of law as a universal value, whose application must also recognize local contexts and practical realities in order to achieve good governance and promote general welfare.

39. The rule of law in Singapore had been strengthened by three key components of access to justice. First, non-discrimination had been enshrined in the Constitution, under which all persons were equal before the law and were entitled to the equal protection of the law. Second, the legal system was effective and functioned well, with an independent and competent judiciary that administered the law fairly and impartially. In the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014, Singapore had been ranked first out of 148 countries for the efficiency of its legal framework in settling disputes. Third, Singapore had fair and predictable laws, enacted by a democratically elected Parliament that was representative of its multiracial, multilingual and multi-religious society. Those laws upheld both individual and public interests, and were regularly updated to meet the changing needs of society. All legislation was made publicly available online; a new project had also been launched to ensure that laws were clearly and readably drafted.

40. **Mr. Lee Moon Hee** (Republic of Korea) said it had been his Government's experience that a firm commitment to the rule of law and its implementation had a positive impact in fostering economic and social development. There were also clear linkages between the rule of law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Given the complexity and cross-cutting nature of the concept, it was essential to enhance the coordination and coherence of efforts for its promotion. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal that the General Assembly should consider preparing a plan of action or a strategy on developing further the linkages between the rule of law, human rights, peace and security and development. Broader engagement with various stakeholders could render the discussions more productive.

41. The importance of access to justice for sustainable development had become evident during deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda. In view of the close relationship between access to justice and the rule of law, a comprehensive approach to the latter, covering all related concepts and principles, was needed in order to meet the common goal of nurturing peaceful and inclusive societies. His Government's efforts to promote access to justice were based on the principles of openness, transparency and responsiveness of judicial authorities, with an

emphasis on access to information relating to judicial institutions and legal systems. All court judgements and prosecutorial decisions were made available to the public; an electronic litigation system was in place; and information on national laws was available online and offline. Proactive and pro bono legal support was also provided, and his Government spared no effort to promote access to justice for socially marginalized groups, including foreigners, immigrants and people with disabilities. Ad hoc open courts had been established in remote areas to improve the geographical accessibility of judicial institutions.

42. *Ms. Millicay (Argentina), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

43. **Ms. Rodríguez Pineda** (Guatemala) said that strengthening the rule of law through access to justice was one of the main challenges facing Guatemala. While access to justice entailed the existence of a free, independent, effective and non-discriminatory judicial system, it also required that people should know their rights and the mechanisms available to uphold them. Access to justice must be measured in qualitative as well as quantitative terms. High levels of impunity in Guatemala were a serious problem that undermined the rule of law. However, cooperation among the various United Nations entities in Guatemala had strengthened national capacity to look at broader criminal phenomena and dismantle criminal networks. Impunity rates for homicide had fallen from 95 per cent in 2010 to 72 per cent in 2013, and convictions had been obtained in high profile cases of international crimes and human rights violations. The progress achieved was largely attributable to the establishment of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, which had been launched in 2006 in partnership with the United Nations. The Commission, an innovative institutional model developed at the express request of her Government, had achieved remarkable success in the prosecution of emblematic cases, technical capacity-building and promotion of legislation. Her delegation valued the partnership that had been established through the Commission between the Government of Guatemala, the United Nations and the donor community, and trusted that when the Commission reached the end of its mandate in 2015 Guatemalan domestic institutions would have been sufficiently strengthened to fulfil their responsibility as part of a sovereign and democratic nation.

44. Her delegation noted with concern that criticisms and questions were increasingly being raised within the United Nations regarding the concept of the rule of law, including its scope, application, purpose and relevance, as had been evident in the context of the recent adoption of the report of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals. That said, her delegation welcomed the inclusion of a reference to the rule of law in proposed goal 16 as well as in the introduction to the goals.

45. All assistance or support provided to strengthen the rule of law in a given State must take account of national ownership. As the Secretary-General had stated in 2004, the main role of the Organization was not to build international substitutes for national structures, but to help build domestic justice capacities. The Guatemalan experience with CICIG was consistent with that assertion.

46. The Sixth Committee did not have a monopoly over the topic of the rule of law, which was a cross-cutting issue relating to various aspects of the Organization's work and requiring technical review from different perspectives, as recognized in the declaration on the rule of law. It was in view of its interrelationship with the three main pillars of the United Nations that, in that declaration, Heads of State and Government had expressed their conviction that the rule of law should be considered in the post 2015 development agenda.

47. The Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations recognized the paramount importance of the Charter in the promotion of the rule of law among nations. It followed that the rule of law required the universal application of the principles incorporated in the Charter. Consequently, it was hard to understand under what circumstances any objection could be raised to the principles of the Charter or how they could be deemed incompatible with a system that sought to uphold the primacy of the law and to guarantee and protect the fundamental rights of all individuals. It was essential to defend the principle of the rule of law in order to preserve the credibility, legitimacy and predictability of the Organization's actions and those of its Member States.

48. **Mr. Muamba** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that, at the international level, the rule of

law required non-interference in the internal affairs of States, respect for the sovereign equality of States and compliance with obligations under public international law. At the national level, it entailed the rejection of arbitrariness, recognition of the equality of all citizens before the law and solid guarantees of equal access to justice for all.

49. His Government had met a number of its obligations under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, including the establishment of a national dialogue and the implementation of an amnesty law. To offer fuller guarantees of the political rights of citizens and the full exercise of public freedoms, it had established a Constitutional Court to which members had recently been appointed. Other notable measures included the dissolution of the military court, the establishment of commercial courts and juvenile courts, and the drafting of a new military criminal code as well as a military judicial code. The foundations had thus been laid for the comprehensive reform of the country's justice system, particularly as the new Constitution contained a specific section on the independence of the judiciary and its reorganization. A Council of State and a Court of Cassation were also planned.

50. His Government had adopted an ambitious plan to promote and protect human rights and looked to outside partners for technical and financial assistance in translating it into reality. It had already taken significant steps to end impunity, in particular for sexual and gender-based violence; senior army officers had been prosecuted and convicted for rape; in addition, the President had appointed a personal representative to combat sexual violence and child recruitment. It would continue to make efforts in that regard and hoped that the progress achieved could serve as an example in ending impunity. The current public debate on the ongoing process of legal reform confirmed that democracy was alive and well in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

51. **Mr. Al-Khater** (Qatar) said that his country had put in place a clear national legal framework consonant with international law and standards and the principles of the declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the rule of law at the national and international levels. In 2012, in cooperation with the United Nations and regional entities, Qatar had opened a centre on the rule of law and anti-corruption

in Doha in order to hold seminars and workshops that would foster the rule of law, including administrative oversight and transparency, at the regional level. The Constitution provided for separation of powers and imposed limits on the executive and legislative branches in order to ensure respect for individual rights and freedoms. Qatar was taking action to harmonize its legislation with the international conventions to which it was a party, and to accede to additional international instruments.

52. At the international level, relations between States should be based on the rule of law, equality, mutual respect and cooperation. The conduct of States must be in accordance with international law; hence the importance of accountability. Implementation of the rule of law required respect for the machinery accepted by the international community to put an end to blatant human rights violations and combat impunity, achieve peaceful settlement of disputes, promote the empowerment of women, combat corruption and uphold the right of peoples to self-determination. Qatar had contributed effectively to the peaceful settlement of many disputes and had made repeated efforts to settle others in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Civil society organizations had proved to be an effective partner in promoting the rule of law, and must therefore be given an opportunity to fulfil their role.

53. International law must be enforced without double standards or political casuistry. Clear and transparent measures should be put in place to hold accountable the perpetrators of serious human rights violations. Failure to respect the rule of law had led peoples to rise up against despotic regimes and demand freedom and self-determination at great personal cost. The United Nations must support their struggle.

54. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that the Charter of the United Nations constituted the foundation of international law at the national and international levels, and should underpin an international system based on friendly relations between States, respect for national sovereignty and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Member States and the Secretariat should seek to work collectively and transparently, without seeking to impose a single model. In promoting the rule of law, the United Nations should focus on capacity-building, technical assistance and the exchange of experiences, all of which were ways to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. The United Nations

Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law was an indispensable part of that process and had benefited hundreds of legal professionals from African countries. The Committee could not claim to promote the rule of law so long as the Programme faced a funding shortfall that jeopardized its future.

55. The International Court of Justice and international and regional arbitration mechanisms should also be supported, as they helped to foster equitable, balanced and transparent relations among States. International justice should not, however, be used as a means to achieve political goals. The International Criminal Court, for example, had strayed from its noble mission by showing selectivity and double standards.

56. It was to be hoped that the Committee's deliberations on the rule of law would focus on consensus issues and would be reflected transparently in the resulting draft resolution.

57. **Ms. Abubakar** (Libya) said that, despite the current exceptional circumstances, her Government had made it a priority to consolidate the rule of law by building a State based on the Constitution and by upholding fundamental freedoms, the peaceful transfer of power and respect for human rights. A commission had begun drafting a new constitution in April 2014, and the outcome of its work would be put to a referendum in early 2015. Free and fair legislative elections had been held in June 2014, resulting in a representative parliament that had replaced the General People's Congress. The Libyan authorities were working to restore stability, end impunity, compensate victims and ensure that justice was done. Legislation had been adopted to criminalize torture, enforced disappearance and discrimination. Other new laws addressed the topics of transitional justice, sexual violence and counter-terrorism. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya had provided valuable technical advice and capacity-building. In order to enhance the rule of law, it was essential to promote international and regional cooperation with a view to building capacities and exchanging lessons learned.

58. The rule of law at the international level was based on the Charter of the United Nations, respect for human rights, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the eradication of colonialism and the right of peoples to self-determination. In particular, the Palestinian people

had a natural, historical and legal right under international law to establish its own independent sovereign State of Palestine. Palestine should therefore be granted full membership in the United Nations.

59. **Mr. Maope** (Lesotho) said that the rule of law needed to be strengthened at the international level, not only to address current global challenges effectively but also because it was the very foundation of peaceful coexistence among nations; it also served as a guarantee of sustainable development, safety and security worldwide. Lasting peace and sustainable development could not be achieved unless human rights were respected and the rule of law upheld. The post-2015 development agenda should reflect that approach.

60. International law must be respected equally by all States; selectivity and double standards in the implementation of international treaties undermined the very nature of the rule of law. The peaceful settlement of disputes was not only one of the main purposes of the United Nations but also a fundamental principle of the international legal system. It was therefore encouraging that the International Court of Justice was considering a larger number of cases on a broad range of aspects of public international law.

61. Each Member State bore the main responsibility for ensuring the rule of law at the national level; however, a genuine global partnership was required to enhance developing countries' capacity to meet that international obligation. Lesotho, for its part, had put in place a number of laws and institutions to ensure administrative fairness, compliance with the rule of law and public accountability. Recent examples included the Speedy Courts Trial Act of 2002, the Sexual Offences Act of 2003, the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act of 2006, the Penal Code of 2010 and the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011. It had also established, in addition to the ordinary courts, a number of specialized courts to deal with specific matters. As a cornerstone for building stable and resilient societies and promoting interaction among citizens and government, while helping to protect basic human rights and freedoms, the rule of law would continue to have a central role in meeting present-day challenges.

62. **Mr. Masood Khan** (Pakistan) said that the rule of law applied to all States equally and was closely linked to peace and security, development, good

governance and human rights. Equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of resources, a secure ecosystem, gender parity, inclusion and political participation were essential ingredients for its successful application. The rule of law did not mean the blind application of all laws but rather the continued implementation of sound laws, the necessary reform of existing laws and the development of new laws to protect the rights of individuals, communities and nations. The Charter of the United Nations, international law and an international justice system should form the basis of a just world order; observance of the fundamental principles of the Charter would strengthen the rule of law at the international level.

63. The rule of law should be applied universally. In conflict and post-conflict situations, the Security Council had a special responsibility to oversee security sector reform and institution-building for transitional justice and accountable law enforcement. In non-conflict situations, the rule of law should be pursued in the context of good governance and the right to development. Regional and global partnerships for eradicating poverty and strengthening institutions were key to the success of programmes promoting the rule of law at the national level.

64. The essence of the rule of law was access to justice. Billions of people lived without the protection of the law and were therefore vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination and violence; they must be empowered to enjoy their full civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, including through the establishment of competent courts and law enforcement agencies. The linkages between the rule of law, access to justice, good governance and economic development should be made an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda. In particular, the mutually reinforcing nature of development and the rule of law should be recognized.

65. Pakistan had sought to build partnerships to promote the rule of law and had made efforts to render its judicial system more accessible and responsive, drawing on the technical assistance and capacity-building provided by its partners. His Government's priorities in that regard included speedy and inexpensive justice, a culture of accountability and the elimination of corruption, with a special focus on developing new laws, strengthening the network of judicial institutions, increasing the number of judicial officers and building the capacity of police,

prosecutors and judges. It was also seeking to make justice accessible to the most vulnerable segments of society, in particular through the provision of legal aid, and to expedite the processing of cases by judges. In the light of the urgent need to adapt law-making to the imperatives of inclusive development, the Pakistan Law Commission had been asked to review all existing laws and recommend any necessary repeals or amendments. To address corruption, a transparent, rule-based and merit-driven system was being developed and discretionary powers were being pared back to make institutions responsive to the rule of law.

66. Bearing in mind the need to anchor the rule of law in a national context, international treaties and norms must be integrated into national legal regimes. That said, the very purpose of the promotion of the rule of law would be defeated if it were invoked as a condition for development assistance. Partnerships between the United Nations and national Governments were valuable in promoting the right to information, recognizing the legal identity of each citizen, increasing legal participation and providing legal services, all of which helped to advance the rule of law and access to justice.

67. **Mr. Ruiz** (Colombia) said that, in its current quest for a sustainable and lasting peace after five decades of armed conflict, Colombia gave central importance to the right to justice not only of victims but of all its citizens. Its Constitution stipulated that it was a rule of law State; as such, it needed strong and independent institutions to guarantee freedoms and curb excessive power in order to strengthen democracy and restore the trust of citizens. Moreover, Colombia had incorporated the norms of international human rights and humanitarian law into its legal system, where they took precedence over domestic law. His Government was continuing to take measures to ensure the right of victims to truth, justice and reparation, as well as implementing legal reform initiatives and strengthening coordination with the United Nations team in Colombia. The Justice and Peace Act provided for the reintegration into society of members of organized armed groups, while the Victims and Land Restitution Act ensured assistance and full restitution for the victims of internal armed conflict.

68. Maintenance of the rule of law against arbitrary or despotic decisions by those in power was the key to developing peaceful societies. It was important, however, to take into account the particular features of

each situation, including different legal traditions and principles, and not to fall into ways of thinking ill-adapted to realities on the ground. The United Nations should give special attention to cooperation with States in strengthening initiatives in support of the rule of law, in particular through enhanced communication between the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. The credibility of the measures taken by the various organs of the United Nations depended on their effectiveness in restoring international peace and security.

69. **Mr. McLay** (New Zealand) said that his delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's proposals to strengthen the linkages between the rule of law and the three pillars of the United Nations. It also welcomed the subtopic chosen for the Committee's debate; access to justice was vital for achieving equality before the law, particularly for the most vulnerable.

70. New Zealand had taken a number of steps to strengthen access to justice in its local communities, including through *Rangatahi* or youth courts held in traditional community meeting houses. In addition, it was helping to promote the rule of law outside its territory through assistance and capacity-building initiatives, in particular to support effective law enforcement, access to legal representation and the establishment of independent judiciaries. His country also provided other Pacific countries with judicial support as required and sent observers to monitor elections both in the Pacific region and beyond. His delegation recognized the role of regional organizations in advancing the rule of law through the provision of assistance tailored to local realities. Individuals could also seek redress through regional courts, which added depth and breadth to the rule of law through the development of regional jurisprudence.

71. His delegation had long held that high priority should be given in peacekeeping mission planning to strengthening rule of law capacity, through such measures as effective and early peacebuilding initiatives geared to local needs. The Security Council should provide greater strategic direction and oversight for those efforts, to ensure that they were coordinated, sequenced and adapted to the relevant context. The rule of law could not be confined to mere declarations of legal principle; principles had to be translated into reality. Furthermore, access to justice must also ensure justice for victims. In that regard, his delegation

welcomed efforts to ensure that victims of atrocity crimes had access to locally-based justice. National truth and reconciliation processes also had an important part to play, alongside more traditional judicial accountability mechanisms.

72. **Ms. Carnal** (Switzerland) said that her delegation welcomed the options proposed by the Secretary-General for strengthening the linkages between the rule of law, human rights, peace and security and development, as well as the proposal for the General Assembly to consider preparing a plan of action or a strategy on developing further those linkages. In that regard, it was important to strengthen international judicial bodies, particularly the International Court of Justice. In order to increase the number of States recognizing the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court, her delegation, together with six others, had written a practical guide explaining the recognition process, in fulfilment of one of the pledges it had made at the 2012 high-level meeting on the rule of law at the national and international levels.

73. It was also essential to strengthen the governance of the United Nations itself; all of its bodies should comply with the principles of the rule of law. Switzerland was committed to the improvement of the Security Council's working methods and increased observance of procedural safeguards in the Council's sanctions system. Her delegation welcomed the recommendation for periodic consideration of the rule of law and its linkages with the three pillars of the United Nations in a full and comprehensive manner: a multidisciplinary, cross cutting approach should be adopted to that end. Furthermore, efforts to strengthen the rule of law required a partnership extending beyond the United Nations.

74. The rule of law must be taken into account in preparing the post-2015 development agenda, as without it sustainable development was inconceivable. Those of its aspects that related to access to justice, non-discriminatory laws and the strengthening of transparent and inclusive institutions should accordingly continue to be explicitly recognized in the final version of the agenda to be adopted in September 2015.

75. **Mr. Musikhin** (Russian Federation) said that the subtopic chosen for the Committee's debate, "Sharing States' national practices in strengthening the rule of law through access to justice", deserved consideration;

however, the discussion of the extremely detailed addendum to the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/213/Add.1), on ways and means of developing further the linkages between the rule of law and the three main pillars of the United Nations, would unfortunately divert attention from it. The basic principle of access to justice, as reflected in many multilateral and regional instruments, was extremely important and should be more widely disseminated. His delegation had consistently held that United Nations discussions on the rule of law should focus on its international dimension; the expanded section on the rule of law at the international level was one of the strongest aspects of the Secretary-General's report on strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities submitted at the current session (A/69/181). In practice, however, the international dimension did not receive sufficient attention or resources. For example, there continued to be a deficit in funding for the United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law, as well as for the United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law; every year planned regional courses on international law were cancelled. At the same time, there appeared to be no lack of funding for United Nations structures working on the rule of law at the national level, including composite Secretariat structures such as coordination groups whose activities were not always transparent. It was regrettable that the report did not shed light on the distribution of mandates among United Nations rule of law structures or suggest ways to streamline the Organization's work.

76. In accordance with paragraph 41 of the declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the rule of law at the national and international levels, the addendum to the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/213/Add.1) should have been prepared with wide stakeholder participation. Its conceptual basis appeared, however, to have been developed not through transparent intergovernmental discussions but through consultations with experts. Moreover, the special thematic briefing on the draft addendum provided by the United Nations Rule of Law Unit in May 2014 had been little more than a formality, since Member States had not had the opportunity to participate in drafting the document. Not surprisingly, their statements on that occasion had been mainly critical, although some interesting proposals had emerged. In particular, it had been stressed that the

international dimension should not be forgotten and that efforts should be made to focus on substantive issues of law, while avoiding points of division among States, such as how to define and measure the rule of law, or what its role should be in the sustainable development agenda. Cooperation on the national dimension of the rule of law had also been proposed, for example through exchanges of best practices, on the understanding that each State would remain free to decide on the best practices it wished to adopt. However, those proposals had had little impact on the final version of the document.

77. His delegation also questioned some of the conclusions of the addendum to the Secretary-General's report. For example, paragraph 39 identified only some of the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations as being of importance for peace and security, whereas, in fact, all the principles were equally important.

78. Paragraph 42 stated that "States marked by weak rule of law" posed significant threats to peace and security, which was a far-reaching conclusion, particularly when there was no common understanding of the rule of law or what might characterize weak rule of law. The problem was not the concept of the rule of law as such: the Russian Federation had consistently spoken in favour of strengthening the international and national order based on law. However, it was crucial to preserve the core of the concept, which rested on the importance of adherence to international obligations with full respect for the principles of sovereignty and equality of States. Through the proposed application of "rule of law indicators" and "measurement of adherence", attempts were being made to make all States conform to some kind of universal template. Such attempts were inappropriate, since a State's system of organization and governance, and the structure of State institutions, were internal matters. It followed from Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter of the United Nations that the Organization had no right to intervene in such matters.

79. Lastly, in response to paragraph 97, it should be emphasized that the Sixth Committee remained the most appropriate forum for discussing the topic of the rule of law since it could avoid undue politicization and focus on the substantive issues. While there had been no problems to date with the involvement of civil society representatives, with whom the Secretariat

cooperated regularly, Member States should be kept better informed of the Secretariat's work on the topic.

80. The text of the traditional resolution on the rule of law should perhaps reflect the non-applicability of a one-size-fits-all approach to the national dimension of the rule of law, stressing that States had the right to establish a rule of law model that was fully in accordance with their legal, political, historical, cultural and other specificities.

81. *Mr. Pašić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

82. **Mr. Majszyk** (Poland) said that the contemporary system of international security was based on all States' adherence to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It was the Organization's responsibility to ensure that those principles were respected. The rule of law was also one of the fundamental principles of international relations and accordingly needed to be supported and strengthened by all States. The 2012 declaration on the rule of law was an important reference point for turning that principle into a solid foundation for peace and international security, human rights and development, while the related reports of the Secretary-General ([A/68/213/Add.1](#) and [A/69/181](#)) correctly identified linkages between the rule of law and those three pillars of the United Nations. A multifaceted approach to the further development of the rule of law would facilitate its implementation at both the national and international levels. It was also crucial to set priorities for further action and lay down principles for cooperation among the institutions involved. Without prejudice to the action already taken, which should be continued, other measures might also be considered in the areas of increasing international support for democratic election processes in Member States and establishing an efficient justice system for electoral proceedings; establishing and strengthening a justice system for administrative proceedings; empowering local government for exercise of the rule of law at the local and regional levels; reinforcing diplomatic efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts; and adopting a comprehensive and consistent approach to defining the mandates of peacekeeping missions for the eradication of sources of conflict and instability in States.

83. With regard to the subtopic for the Committee's debate, the right of access to justice was crucial to

individuals, enabling them to exercise their right to a fair hearing within a reasonable period of time before an independent and impartial court, benefit from the support of a public defender, receive legal assistance and obtain adequate legal remedy. It was also essential to eliminate all forms of discrimination, provide access to free legal assistance for people living in poverty, remove restrictions on access to dispute settlement procedures and ensure access to extrajudicial procedures to obtain compensation. Poland, for its part, had for the last few years been implementing a project designed to improve public access to justice, including through educational campaigns, improvements in the quality of services for parties at court, and the expansion of alternative dispute resolution methods. It had also taken a range of measures to ensure the efficient functioning of its judicial system, such as increasing the efficiency of criminal proceedings, accelerating and simplifying civil proceedings, and enhancing the protection of child victims of crime and victims of sexual crime and human trafficking.

84. The international system of justice must also be strengthened, in particular by reinforcing the role of the International Court of Justice and ensuring the universal application of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. To ensure broad access to justice for individuals, the largest possible number of States should ratify or accede to international treaties that established procedures for submitting human rights complaints to extrajudicial bodies. Legal and institutional instruments to monitor compliance with States' obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law should, furthermore, be strengthened.

85. **Mr. Nonomura** (Japan) said that the promotion of the rule of law was one of the pillars of Japanese diplomatic policy. The consolidation of the basis of the rule of law, through the progressive development of international law and its codification, was essential for establishing a stable and predictable international legal system. Furthermore, the use of international courts for the peaceful settlement of disputes, through the fair and impartial application of international law, strengthened the peace and security of the international community. In that regard, Japan had accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and was a staunch supporter of other international courts. Lastly, regional frameworks played a crucial role in promoting the rule of law at both the international and national levels. One such

example was the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, which Japan continued to support. His Government also provided assistance to developing countries, particularly those in the Asia-Pacific region, in building stable national legal systems.

86. **Ms. Alias** (Malaysia) said that respect for the rule of law at the international level was essential in ensuring lasting international peace and security; without it there could be no stability and, consequently, no economic development. Her Government attached particular importance to the theme of the current deliberations, “Sharing States’ national practices in strengthening the rule of law through access to justice”. In Malaysia, access to justice was enshrined in the Federal Constitution, which protected individuals’ rights and equality before the law, without discrimination. In addition, the Public Prosecutor, when initiating criminal proceedings, sought always to act with the sole purpose of protecting the public interest and the rule of law. Laws were in place to ensure that arrested persons were informed of the grounds for their arrest, brought to justice without delay and given the possibility of legal representation. The Federal Constitution also guaranteed the independence of the judiciary, while the establishment, jurisdiction and composition of courts and the judicial hierarchy were prescribed by law and were not open to interference by the executive.

87. Her Government had undertaken a number of legal reforms to uphold the principle of the rule of law through access to justice, including the annulment of three proclamations of emergency and the repeal of the Internal Security Act of 1960. Several mechanisms served to ensure the right of legal representation, such as the National Legal Aid Foundation, which offered free legal assistance where necessary, the Legal Aid Department, which provided legal assistance, representation and mediation services, and the Malaysian Bar Council Legal Aid Centre, which provided pro bono legal advice and representation. Her Government had also overcome geographical limitations to universal access, in particular through the introduction of mobile courts and the establishment of alternative judicial channels for specific matters, such as homebuyer or consumer claims. Where the protection of human rights was concerned, its commitment to ensuring access to justice was exemplified by the complaints procedure of its Human Rights Commission, set up in 1999.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.