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Chair: Ms. Bogyay (Hungary)
later: Ms. Eugenio (Vice-Chair) (Argentina)
later: Ms. Bogyay (Hungary)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Organization of work

1. **Mr. Mahmassani** (Secretary of the Committee) read out a list of the special procedure mandate holders and other experts scheduled to make presentations to the Committee at its current session.

2. **The Chair** said she took it that, following past practice, the Committee wished to extend invitations to the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council and other experts to submit their reports to and interact with the Committee.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. **Mr. González Behmaras** (Cuba) said that, while his delegation was grateful to the Secretariat for accommodating a number of concerns regarding the list of special procedure mandate holders and other experts, greater coordination with Member States was needed in drawing up the list and preparing the interactive dialogues in order to improve efficiency and save time, especially for smaller delegations.

5. Despite the fact that only two passes were supposed to be given to each delegation for the General Assembly Hall, three representatives from the delegation of the United States of America had been present in the Hall at the same time at the morning meeting that day, meaning either that the delegation had received more than two passes or that representatives were being allowed to enter without passes, which was a risk to the health of all present. While his delegation was not in the least surprised that the delegation of the United States might have received more passes or been granted more access than everyone else, the principle of sovereign equality was at the very heart of the United Nations and must be respected.

6. **Mr. Al Khalil** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking on a point of order, said that his delegation shared the views expressed by the representative of Cuba. He recalled that the Chair had yet to respond to the concern that he had raised at an earlier meeting regarding the use of terms that were inappropriate in the context of the Committee and of the United Nations.

7. **The Chair** said that she had consulted the Office of Legal Affairs, and it was not a matter for the secretariat or the Chair to address.

General debate (*continued*)

8. **Ms. Nassrullah** (Iraq) said that international cooperation was essential to combat the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, in particular by helping

countries struggling to curb the spread of the disease owing to inadequate health-care infrastructure and to concomitant economic and security challenges.

9. Within its own limited capabilities, Iraq had adopted a series of precautionary measures to combat the pandemic and contain its impact, although much remained to be done. Meanwhile, Iraq continued to combat terrorism, another scourge of epidemic proportions, having liberated its cities from the grip of terrorists, aided by the will of the Iraqi people, international support and the sacrifices of its security forces. However, the war on terrorism and violent extremism continued.

10. Iraq remained committed to promoting and protecting human rights in accordance with international instruments, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations. The Iraqi constitution enshrined the freedoms of religion, belief and opinion, among others. Moreover, Iraq had recently joined the Group of Friends of Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion or Belief.

11. His Government was working tirelessly to promote the principles of justice and equality in all national legislation by enacting laws governing rights and responsibilities and eradicating all forms of racial discrimination. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination had been incorporated into national law and the Constitution.

12. Children in Iraq, which was in the grip of a major humanitarian tragedy, had fallen victim to flagrant human rights violations at the hands of terrorist gangs of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In response, the Iraqi Government was reviewing the relevant national laws, and in 2019 the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had adopted a draft law on the rights of the child, criminalizing the recruitment and use of children as soldiers.

13. Iraq was committed to the effort to establish a programme and mechanisms to empower Iraqi women, enabling them to participate in the decision-making process and thereby build a better future for themselves and their country.

14. Her Government had put in place a programme whose aim was to establish an integrated social protection system with social security networks to empower youth and vulnerable groups, especially persons with special needs and older persons. Relevant legislation aimed to provide protection to older persons working in the private sector and empower them to live secure and dignified lives. Iraq supported the call to

formulate an international instrument for older persons and emphasized the need to implement the Sustainable Development Goals on the basis of an international human rights framework.

15. In closing, she reiterated his country's solidarity with the Palestinian people and its conviction that resolving the question of Palestine and upholding the rights of the Palestinian people would entail the establishment of an independent State, contributing to regional and global stability.

16. **Mr. Caballero Gennari** (Paraguay) said that his Government was stepping up its efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, prioritizing the lives and health of people and zealously safeguarding the civil and political liberties and social and economic rights of all, especially the most vulnerable. Social development plans and programmes for the eradication of extreme poverty and inequality, access to decent work and social integration were being expanded. In addition to conditional cash transfer programmes and a support programme for older persons, three programmes had been launched to ensure food security for the most vulnerable persons, including those who were self-employed or had lost their jobs.

17. His Government was implementing a project for the protection of women, children and adolescents against gender-based violence in the context of the pandemic. It was also rolling out its fourth national equality plan, which was focused on combating all forms of violence against women and promoting the economic empowerment of women and their social and political participation. In addition, it was developing a national care policy and an Act on public policies for rural women.

18. The human rights of all girls, boys and adolescents were guaranteed in Paraguay. To uphold the right of children to live in a family, the Government had recently approved a new Act on alternative care and adoption. It was also strengthening mechanisms for the prevention of child abuse, taking into account lockdown measures during the pandemic.

19. The economic recovery plan launched by the Government included measures in the areas of social protection, public investment in jobs and development loans, which would be accompanied by reforms to enable progress towards the transformation of the State.

20. The Government was developing a plan for the further development of the most vulnerable indigenous communities and, in coordination with civil society, indigenous leaders and other interested parties, a national plan for indigenous peoples, which would be

based on their world view and promote good practices in intercultural dialogue. Information on general measures for the prevention of COVID-19 had been disseminated in indigenous languages. The 19 indigenous languages of Paraguay were a fundamental part of the national identity, and the Government was therefore always working to protect, respect and promote them.

21. **Mr. Lam Padilla** (Guatemala) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had disproportionately affected the economies of developing countries. Multilateralism would be key to emerging from the crisis, and Governments must work together to produce a united response.

22. Seven decades after its adoption, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its comprehensive implementation remained a priority for humanity. The current outlook seemed discouraging at times, given the persistent human rights violations that continued to affect the most vulnerable populations, including children, women, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants, indigenous peoples and young people. However, since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, international mechanisms and instruments had been strengthened by focusing on specific issues, such as political and civil rights and economic, social and cultural rights. Significant progress had been made in strengthening the rights of children, migrant workers and persons with disabilities, the right of peoples to self-determination and the protection of refugees. Other important achievements in human rights and criminal justice were the adoption of the Rome Statute and the creation of the International Criminal Court.

23. Strengthening social development required a new transformational approach that effectively addressed the complex and increasingly interrelated problems that had emerged and intensified in recent years, such as the widening gender gap and the increase in poverty. The opportunity presented by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must be seized to reduce the inequality gaps that directly affected the most vulnerable groups.

24. His Government had continuously endeavoured to strengthen national and international mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights, with an emphasis on prevention. It was currently reorganizing the work of Ministries with a view to addressing compliance with the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace and agreements on human rights and social unrest in an efficient, responsible and comprehensive manner. A detailed register of the international commitments of

Guatemala had been compiled to ensure appropriate follow-up to the reports and recommendations of human rights mechanisms of both the United Nations system and the inter-American system.

25. **Mr. Mouctar** (Chad) said that, as part of its social and economic development efforts, his Government had taken important steps to ease the burden of women, including those in rural areas. For example, microcredit had been granted to women to enable them to develop income-generating activities, thus improving the standard of living for families. Progress had also been made in education for girls. At the initiative of the President, 30 per cent of all elected and appointed positions were reserved for women.

26. Specific measures had been adopted to put an end to child marriage. The Act prohibiting child marriage set the minimum marriage age at 18 years and provided for imprisonment of from 5 to 10 years and a fine for any person who forced a minor into marriage. Religious and traditional leaders and members of civil society were actively engaged in combating child marriage.

27. Gender mainstreaming was a priority of his Government in the formulation and implementation of public policies. However, the economic problems faced by Chad since 2014 and the current security context limited the capacity of the Government to ensure the well-being of the Chadian people. As a developing country, Chad called upon its partners to provide assistance in overcoming those challenges, which had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

28. Since the advent of democracy in December 1990, significant progress had been achieved in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Faithful to the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Chad reaffirmed its commitment to the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights and their promotion and protection, with respect for the principles of the sovereignty of States, non-interference and non-politicization.

29. Concerning Hong Kong and Xinjiang, his delegation reaffirmed its support for a solution, stressing that human rights issues should be addressed with respect for the principles of international law, in particular the sovereignty of States, in a spirit of mutual respect and constructive dialogue.

30. **Mr. Beleffi** (San Marino) said that his country welcomed omnibus resolution [74/306](#) on the COVID-19 pandemic recently adopted by the General Assembly, the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Global

Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 and the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. It had joined the global call of the Secretary-General for an end to all violence against women everywhere, including in the home.

31. In the current climate of increased uncertainty, setbacks were being witnessed in the achievement of progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. It was vital to ensure access to inclusive and high-quality education, nutrition and health care for all children, to prevent and counter all forms of violence against children, including domestic violence, abuse and sexual exploitation online and offline, and cyberbullying, and to bridge the digital divide. As part of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, San Marino had welcomed the positive results in ending and preventing grave violations against children in armed conflict. However, the number of verified violations against children remained a concern, and education was still under attack.

32. During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, it was important to mitigate the negative impacts on the health, lives, rights and well-being of older persons. Older persons should be invited to participate in the response to the pandemic. Persons with disabilities were also facing serious disruption to their employment, education and access to social protection and other support services. The global response and recovery should also be disability-inclusive and protect the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. Migrants often faced challenges such as inadequate living and working conditions, limited local knowledge and networks, xenophobia, discrimination, a lack of access to health and related services, and exclusion from the responses of host countries. Recognizing the essential role of the United Nations in promoting and protecting the rights of the most vulnerable groups, San Marino would support all initiatives aimed at reaching such a goal.

33. **Mr. Gastorn** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that, in its efforts to achieve the goals set at the World Summit for Social Development, his country had managed to improve per capita income. The current Government had introduced free primary and secondary education, which had resulted in the achievement of gender parity in primary and secondary schools. The Government continued to ensure the availability of medicines and medical equipment in hospitals, health facilities and dispensaries and to improve the accessibility of health facilities. The construction and rehabilitation of water infrastructure had led to improved access to clean and safe water in most urban and rural areas.

34. His Government had made significant changes to national statutory mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups and continued to facilitate the participation of person with disabilities in socioeconomic activities. The Government had put in place national frameworks to guide gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and mainstreamed gender equality objectives in all its policies and programmes.

35. His Government continued to work closely with national Governments and development partners in the area of mutual legal assistance in the investigation of criminal offences, in particular transnational organized crime, having ratified various conventions on that matter. The drug abuse problem was being tackled by a national task force comprising different law enforcement agencies and through close cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

36. The United Republic of Tanzania currently hosted approximately 283,000 refugees and asylum seekers, mostly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. The voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees residing in Tanzania had continued since September 2017 in accordance with international law and practices. As at 30 September 2020, over 96,000 Burundian refugees had voluntarily returned to Burundi.

37. The cardinal principle of the Charter of the United Nations of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States must be observed. His country continued to support China in the implementation of the “one country, two systems” policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

38. **Ms. Vives Balmaña** (Andorra) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted and, in some cases, exacerbated existing weaknesses and inequalities. Measures put in place to combat the pandemic had been used to suppress the participation of civil society and human rights defenders. The increases in gender-based and sexual violence, forced marriages, harassment and cyberbullying were other worrying effects of the pandemic. Her country had unfortunately witnessed an increase in cases of gender-based violence. In September 2020, the Parliament had unanimously approved increased human and financial resources for combating violence against women and assisting victims.

39. The pandemic had also revealed the vulnerability of progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. An estimated 1.6 billion children had seen their right to education denied. Following the closure of schools and educational facilities to stop the spread of the virus, protection of the right to education had been a challenge.

In Andorra, the Ministry of Education had provided teachers and students technical support in delivering effective lessons using new technologies. International cooperation should be encouraged to address the digital divide within and among countries and ensure that all countries could take advantage of new technologies to guarantee the right to education. Andorra welcomed the projects and strategies pursued by the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), with the aim of providing high-quality education for children in all circumstances.

40. Justice was vital for the protection and promotion of human rights. Andorra supported the work of the International Criminal Court and existing mechanisms, such as the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, to ensure that the gravest violations of human rights did not go unpunished.

41. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that the international community should recall its commitment to adopt a people-centred and human rights based-approach to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, bearing in mind that States bore the primary responsibility for elaborating and implementing response strategies. Families were the foundation of society, and the grave challenges associated with COVID-19 faced by many families around the world, especially those living in poverty, were a matter of concern. The current crisis had highlighted the importance of investing in family-friendly policies. In 2019, his Government, together with the United States, Hungary and Poland, had launched the Partnership for Families, which had played an important role in promoting the issue within the United Nations.

42. Brazil remained fully committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all women and girls in all situations. In a year that had been marked by violent attacks on religious communities, it was heartening that Brazil and other members of the International Religious Freedom Alliance were being increasingly mobilized to counter the growing threats to freedom of religion or belief. His Government was doing its utmost to respond to the current humanitarian challenges, especially those arising from the influx of migrants and refugees across its northern border with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Those persons were received by Operation Welcome, a multi-agency task force led by the Government.

43. Efforts were also being made to strengthen the universal health system in Brazil to provide all in need with the necessary care and treatment. Ensuring timely access to high-quality, safe, effective and affordable

medicines, vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and other health technologies was key to defeating COVID-19 and saving lives.

44. Brazil was committed to promoting racial equality and combating racism and racial discrimination. It was regrettable that the General Assembly had yet to reach an agreement on the modalities of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, despite having been mandated to define them during its seventy-fourth session. His delegation was ready to engage in that process and hoped that the task would be completed during the current session. The support of Brazil for the negotiation of a United Nations declaration on the promotion of and full respect for the human rights of people of African descent was proof of its relentless determination to combat all forms of discrimination and promote and protect the rights of those people.

45. While his country welcomed the opportunities provided by the increasing interconnectivity between peoples and nations, it remained concerned about the difficult task of weighing the benefits of the digital revolution against the risk of privacy breaches.

46. **Mr. Wislocki** (Austria) said that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, each State must abide by its human rights obligations. Any limitations of rights to stop the spread of the virus must be temporary, proportionate and non-discriminatory and enjoy democratic legitimacy.

47. The international community should collectively discuss human rights violations and the persistent failure to protect the rights of each and every person. His delegation supported constructive dialogue in the Committee on country-specific human rights situations, which were not only a domestic issue. During the 2020 sessions of the Human Rights Council, which had been led by a President from Austria, the importance of dialogue and cooperation at the international level had been reaffirmed, and urgent debates had been held on the situation in Belarus and on racism and police brutality.

48. Austria rejected all forms of racial discrimination, xenophobia and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief. Given the rise in antisemitic incidents across the world and especially in Europe, his Government was developing a comprehensive strategy against antisemitism. Austria firmly condemned persecution, discrimination and violence against ethnic or religious minorities. All Member States should respect the rights of minorities and fulfil their commitments under the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

49. The worldwide pushback against women's rights was cause for concern. Member States should reiterate their full commitment to their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and his country would continue to intensify its efforts in that respect. Homophobia and intolerance towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons were still widespread. The legal obligations of States to safeguard the human rights of those persons were well-established in international law, but their full implementation still required determined action by all.

50. During a crisis, free, independent and pluralistic media played an indispensable role in keeping the public informed. Austria had therefore introduced a draft resolution on the safety of journalists at the forty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council. Combating transnational organized crime, in particular trafficking in persons and the illegal trade in organs, remained a priority for Austria. Human rights in the administration of justice, including the situation of children deprived of liberty, was another traditional priority.

51. **Mr. Barro** (Senegal) said that agenda items 70, entitled "Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance", and 71, entitled "Right of peoples to self-determination", remained pressing concerns of the international community. Regarding the occupied Palestinian territories, Senegal, as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, reiterated its call for increased efforts towards the only just and viable solution – two States – to ensure peace and sustainable security in the region. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance had been exacerbated by the pandemic, affecting in particular persons of African descent, indigenous people, linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities, and migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

52. Regarding agenda item 28, entitled "Advancement of Women", the United Nations and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women were leaders in the promotion and protection of women's rights. In the context of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, his delegation welcomed the important regulatory and institutional work carried out for the advancement of women and gender equality. His Government had adopted laws, programmes and strategies, including the Emerging Senegal Plan, which integrated gender in its priority areas for 2019–2023, with a view to ensuring inclusive and gender-balanced participation in the development process. The conclusions of the report of

the Secretary-General on intensifying efforts to end obstetric fistula within a decade (A/75/264) further encouraged Senegal in its commitment to health, including the efforts to end obstetric fistula.

53. With regard to agenda item 27, entitled “Social development”, cooperation must be strengthened in order to reduce inequalities and achieve social inclusion at all levels, with a view to realizing the ambition of eradicating poverty. Social inclusion had been prioritized in his Government’s plan for the period up to 2035. The Government reiterated its call for debt to be cancelled for vulnerable countries.

54. Turning to agenda items 68, entitled “Promotion and protection of the rights of children”, and 72, entitled “Promotion and protection of human rights”, his delegation welcomed the high quality of the reports providing information on the considerable progress made and the immensity of the challenges to overcome in the promotion and protection of human rights and the rights of the child.

55. **Ms. Mehdiyeva** (Azerbaijan) said that, in addition to grappling with unprecedented challenges, her country was also defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity from the foreign aggressor. On 27 September 2020, Armenian armed forces had launched a large-scale military assault against Azerbaijan, which had then taken countermeasures to protect its civilian population. Armenia had once again demonstrated its lack of respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, recruiting foreign mercenaries as so-called “volunteers” for use in combat operations against Azerbaijan. The numerous war crimes committed must be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. The attacks had targeted Ganja, the second-largest city in Azerbaijan, and regions close to the capital. A cluster rocket had landed only 10 metres from the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Export Oil Pipeline, which was of primary importance for the energy security and development of the region.

56. The continued aggression of Armenia and its unlawful presence in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan were the main causes of the war and the recurring escalations on the ground. Having committed ethnic cleansing in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, Armenia had attempted to present the Armenians of the region as its sole population. The illegality of the ethnically constructed subordinate regime established by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan had been repeatedly and unambiguously stated at the international level. Armenia conveniently distorted and misinterpreted the right of self-determination to justify its military occupation.

57. In its unanimously adopted resolutions concerning the conflict, the Security Council had unequivocally condemned the use of force against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territories; confirmed that the Nagorno-Karabakh region was part of Azerbaijan; and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan had repeatedly reiterated the need for the peaceful coexistence of the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of Nagorno-Karabakh, but its call had unfortunately not resonated with the leadership of Armenia.

58. Despite the difficult times, her Government had continued to address the social and economic needs of the population. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a stimulus package worth \$2 billion had been released to ensure economic stability and tackle employment issues. Social relief measures covered nearly half the population. Pensions had been raised by 27 per cent and the average salary by 50 per cent.

59. **Ms. Henry** (Jamaica) said that her country was disturbed at the increasing reports of widespread violations of human rights, manifested in racism, discrimination and individual and systemic acts of social exclusion. Such practices undermined collective efforts to preserve lives and livelihoods during the current COVID-19 crisis. Jamaica therefore supported the call to action for human rights of the Secretary-General. Her Government would continue to strengthen its legal, policy and administrative frameworks to ensure broader access by citizens, in particular the most vulnerable, to high-quality health-care, education and social protection services. Under the COVID-19 Allocation of Resources for Employees Programme, temporary cash transfers were provided to cushion the economic impact faced by individuals and businesses during the pandemic. Innovative steps had been taken to safeguard the health and well-being of older persons, including the establishment of a helpline and mobile supermarkets, the provision of readily available information about the pandemic and the implementation of a mental health initiative focused solely on the elderly.

60. Jamaica remained committed to ensuring the full realization of the 2030 Agenda, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 5, and the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. An increased number of women had been elected to the House of Representatives in the national elections held in September 2020. The Government would continue to implement national policies and legislative reforms to foster a society that respected and celebrated the

contributions of both men and women. Men and boys were engaged as key partners in the ongoing programme to ensure gender equality and empowerment.

61. Efforts must be redoubled to prevent the health crisis from becoming a child rights crisis. Her Government had pursued measures to safeguard the educational needs of children and reaffirmed its commitment to the principal objective of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. It would continue to strengthen its protection mechanisms and legislative framework to protect the lives of children and would partner with international agencies to promote and uphold the rights of children.

62. The pandemic had hindered the ability of the international community to address critical issues related to crime prevention and international drug control. Jamaica therefore looked forward to the resumption of the sixty-third session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to be held in December 2020, and the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, to be held in March 2021.

63. **Mr. Al Khalil** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, seventy-five years on, the United Nations had fallen short of the lofty aspirations of its founding fathers. It had failed to uphold the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations, the chief among them being sovereignty, the sovereign equality of nations, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the non-use or threat of use of force in international relations. Foreign aggression, occupation and racist practices continued to prevent millions from exercising their right of self-determination and other rights.

64. The imposition by certain countries and regional groups of punitive measures on other countries, unauthorized by the Security Council and with the aim of unilateral political and economic coercion, constituted a violation of international law and the Charter. Maintaining such measures in place during the global health emergency caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic could further undermine the capacity of the targeted countries to combat the pandemic and provide care to those afflicted with the disease. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the calls by the Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials for the sanctions to be lifted.

65. His Government remained firmly opposed to the politicization of human rights issues and mechanisms and to their use in service of the interests of certain influential Member States, which were targeting other Member States, including his own, for reasons unrelated to international law, the Charter or human rights.

66. United States and Turkish occupying forces continued to lay waste to the areas of his country under their control by killing; bombing; expelling populations; plundering oil, gas and artefacts; stealing agricultural crops; and supporting terrorist organizations and separatist militia collaborators. Meanwhile, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (Nusrah Front) and associated entities retained control of Idlib, oppressing and terrorizing its people. The so-called autonomous administration and illegitimate entities in north-eastern Syria were perpetrating manifold violations of the rights of children, killing and arresting children and recruiting them as soldiers.

67. The Syrian Arab Republic took pride in having pioneered the enactment of laws protecting the civil rights of women and promoting their equality in all areas of life, including education and political participation. Regrettably, however, despite such progress, the civil war and unilateral coercive measures to which his country had been subjected had placed an enormous burden on Syrian women.

68. For decades, the Middle East had been ravaged by the flagrant human rights violations perpetrated against the people of the occupied Syrian Golan and other Arab territories by the Israeli occupation authorities. Such practices could not have persisted without the political and military cover of certain Member States, which had shielded Israel from accountability and punishment. The occupied Syrian Arab Golan was an integral part of his country's territory and, as such, would be recovered sooner or later. The Syrian Arab Republic called for the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan and other Arab territories to cease. Lastly, his country remained steadfast in its principled support of the Palestinian people.

69. **Mr. Uzunovski** (North Macedonia) said that his country had undergone several years of political and institutional crisis, with serious challenges in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. In response, his Government had adopted a reform package, which included measures to further strengthen the independence of the justice system and increase its transparency and efficiency.

70. Preventing and combating organized crime and corruption was a strategic priority of his Government. The new Act on the prevention of corruption and conflicts of interest introduced a transparent procedure for the selection and appointment of members of the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption and strengthened the capacity of the Commission to inspect the assets of elected and appointed individuals and scrutinize legality in the financing of political parties.

Minority rights and the well-being of all ethnic communities were also priorities. With the full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, a set of guarantees had been established for the full protection of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of all communities in North Macedonia.

71. Measures had been adopted to integrate gender-responsive budgeting in policies, promote equal treatment and prevent gender-based discrimination. The restrictive Act on abortion had been revised to empower women to exercise their reproductive rights. A new Act had been prepared with the goal of establishing a comprehensive and coordinated system of prevention and protection against gender-based violence. The new Act on the prevention of and protection against discrimination introduced sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds of discrimination, which responded to the serious deficiencies in national legislation in terms of the recognition of the gender identities of transgender persons.

72. In the current unprecedented times, media workers must be able to carry out their duties in a safe manner. North Macedonia had joined a number of Member States in support of the Verified campaign to combat misinformation online.

73. During the current session, North Macedonia would continue to be a staunch supporter of proposals relating to the rights of the child, non-discrimination, the rights of minorities, freedom of opinion and expression and the protection of journalists, freedom of religion and belief, the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, and the eradication of poverty and exclusion. It would be vocal against racism and continue to advocate the abolition of the death penalty.

74. *Ms. Eugenio (Argentina), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

75. **Ms. Ndayishimiye** (Burundi) said that, following the success of the electoral process in 2020 and the establishment of democratic institutions, the new Government of Burundi was focusing on socioeconomic development, with an emphasis on combating poverty and promoting good political, economic and administrative governance. The Government was striving to build cooperative bilateral and multilateral relations based on mutual respect and the sovereign equality of States. Non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States was an important principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and a fundamental norm of international relations.

76. During the current session, her delegation would reiterate its firm opposition to the practice of

politicizing human rights issues by exerting pressure on other countries to achieve political gains that had nothing to do with the well-being of the people concerned. On that basis, her delegation had joined a group of countries in expressing firm support for the position of China concerning Xinjiang and Hong Kong. Burundi rejected the use by certain States of illegal means to influence geopolitics in Southern countries and the imposition of unilateral coercive measures on other countries, in violation of the principles of the Charter.

77. In the area of social development, priority should be given to reducing poverty and combating social exclusion. Despite its limited resources, Burundi had always demonstrated its commitment to the protection and promotion of vulnerable groups, including by joining various international, regional and national instruments. The Government had taken measures to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, including the adoption of laws to promote the participation of women in decision-making. The level of representation of women in the Government had reached more than 30 per cent, and the President had appointed a woman from the Twa ethnic minority to the Government for the first time. As part of the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Government had established a network of women mediators, who played an important role in settling conflicts through dialogue and promoting a culture of non-violence in the country. In his inauguration speech in June 2020, the President had promised that retired persons would receive free health care and a monthly pension equal to their final salary.

78. Despite those achievements, the school dropout rate of girls, the increase in violence against women and girls, poverty among vulnerable groups and the lack of employment for young people were persistent challenges that her Government would not be able to overcome without the assistance of partners through mutually beneficial cooperation with respect for national sovereignty and the dignity of the Burundian people.

79. **Ms. Bajracharya** (Nepal) said that, while the COVID-19 pandemic had severely affected lives and livelihoods across the world, vulnerable peoples and countries were finding it more difficult to weather the storm. In that context, and with the commencement of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, an honest introspection of achievements and existing gaps was of particular importance.

80. Her country's outlook on human rights was anchored in its steadfast commitment to the principles of universality, impartiality, interrelatedness and non-selectivity and the right to development. Human

rights formed the fundamental pillar of the Constitution of Nepal, and universal human rights principles and values had been enshrined in national laws, policies and practices. The implementation of human rights commitments had been ensured by an independent judiciary, the National Human Rights Commission, a vibrant civil society, the media and constitutional commissions that safeguarded the rights of diverse groups.

81. The Constitution criminalized all forms of violence and discrimination against women and guaranteed equal rights and the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health for women. The Government had introduced legal and policy reforms to recognize the third gender and protect persons with that status from discrimination. During the current difficult time, the Government continued to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people through social protection programmes, including a cash transfer programme for the elderly, single women, persons with disabilities, Dalits and endangered ethnicities. As a secular State, Nepal had laws guaranteeing freedom of religion as a fundamental right.

82. As a member of the Human Rights Council since 2018, Nepal was contributing constructively to the promotion of human rights through an objective and apolitical approach, bringing its unique perspective as a landlocked least developed country that was striving for socioeconomic transformation. It was eager to serve a second term with the continued support and cooperation of all Member States.

83. **Mr. Srivihok** (Thailand) said that, as one of the original signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, his country continued to uphold the key values of the United Nations and the guiding principles of the promotion and protection of human rights.

84. Thailand echoed the call of the Secretary-General in his policy brief on COVID-19 and human rights to put people and their rights at the forefront of response and recovery efforts. Given the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on women and girls, his Government continued to focus on improving gender equality and the rights of women and girls, especially in areas such as access to health-care services and high-quality education and the prevention of gender-based violence. With the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) in 2020, Thailand would remain steadfast in its

commitment to enhancing the rights of women and girls, including female inmates.

85. Since 2002, his Government had continued to improve the universal health system in terms of service coverage and delivery targeting the most marginalized segments of society. In addition to the Constitution, which embraced the values of equal rights and non-discrimination, and the Gender Equality Act of 2015, a bill aimed at legally recognizing same-sex civil partnerships and enhancing the rights of same-sex couples had been approved by the Cabinet in July 2020.

86. Thailand was a strong believer in the effectiveness of public-private partnerships in promoting and protecting human rights. It was proud to be the first country in Asia to have adopted a national action plan on business and human rights in full conformity with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

87. **Mr. Sisa** (Botswana) said that, in April 2020, his Government had adopted a COVID-19 response plan that had assisted vulnerable households with food packages and provided wage subsidies for three months to workers in sectors adversely affected by the pandemic. The Government had also adopted an economic recovery and transformation plan to stimulate the economy and assist local businesses in withstanding the effects of the pandemic.

88. Botswana remained committed to addressing poverty, hunger, unemployment and inequality, all of which had been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2020, his Government would introduce a bill on sex offenders to address gender-based violence against women and girls, which would complement the national strategy for ending gender-based violence. The Government had adopted strategies to promote social inclusion and equitable access to basic services, such as education, health, housing and sanitation. To improve the livelihoods of vulnerable populations and communities in rural and remote areas, the Government had prioritized programmes for agricultural support, economic empowerment, public works, poverty eradication and social protection. Low-income groups were provided basic shelter through the low-income housing programme and the President's housing appeal. Gender equality and the empowerment of women remained top priorities, and economic empowerment programmes targeted women entrepreneurs.

89. Youth businesses were supported through the youth development fund. Public expenditure on education in Botswana was among the highest in the world, and access to basic education was almost universal. Programmes were in place to ensure that learners with special education needs, orphans and

vulnerable children had access to high-quality education. The supplementary feeding of primary school children had continued nationwide to ensure the provision of healthy nutrition and improve school attendance. The vulnerable group feeding programme at health facilities targeted children under 5 years of age, expectant women, lactating mothers and tuberculosis outpatients.

90. **Ms. Alfuhaid** (Kuwait) said that in a year filled with international milestones, including the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Organization, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic raged on, compounding existing economic, social and humanitarian challenges and hampering efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

91. While the pandemic did not discriminate, it had disproportionately affected many vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women and persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, the present difficulties had underscored the importance of multilateralism and collective efforts to overcome the most pressing challenges, which included many of the issues on the Committee's agenda.

92. The year 2020 marked the fifteenth anniversary of legislation that had granted Kuwaiti women full political rights. That same year, gains related to the empowerment of women included the enactment of a new law protecting women from domestic violence and the swearing-in of eight women prosecutors as the country's first female judges.

93. Over the previous months, young people had made invaluable contributions to the fight against COVID-19 and its repercussions on Kuwaiti society. In order to attain sustainable development and prosperity, it would be necessary to invest in young people, who accounted for over 60 per cent of the population, and to empower women; such initiatives determined the level of advancement and the welfare of any modern society.

94. Kuwait was fully committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, in line with the relevant international laws and instruments and based on the Charter of the United Nations. The effort should proceed in a manner that respected cultural and religious diversity, particularly in the light of the increase in armed conflicts and the spread of persecution, racism, and religious and other forms of intolerance. Acts of violence and discrimination in any form could not be condoned in that day and age.

95. Despite the gains achieved to date, much remained to be done to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights around the world and the full inclusion of

marginalized groups in development programmes, particularly amid the ongoing fight against COVID-19 and its impact.

96. **Mr. Prasad** (Fiji) said that gender equality was at the heart of his country's national development plan. Important gains had been made in women's education rights, maternal health, access to health services and representation in leadership in Fiji. As part of its relentless efforts to end violence against women, the Government had changed the laws governing sexual assault to make it easier and safer for women to obtain access to justice.

97. His Government had taken important steps to protect the rights of children in the context of climate change. The national climate change policy, the national development plan and the Bill of Rights of the Constitution provided the right to a clean and healthy environment. There was a real fear that a prolonged social and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Fiji and other small island developing States could wipe away the gains made in advancing the interests of young people, children and women; those gains must not be lost to COVID-19.

98. His country knew all too well that climate change and sea-level rise would lead to the displacement of thousands of people and many communities. The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway highlighted the importance of engaging persons with disabilities in disaster preparedness and the response to climate catastrophes and slow onset climate changes. Fiji had ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and was a member of the intergovernmental Convention against Torture Initiative. Fiji appreciated the tremendous work of human rights defenders operating in conflict and post-conflict situations. Human rights defenders must be protected, and their ability to operate freely to advance human rights must be respected.

99. The response to COVID-19 must enhance, not narrow, the human rights of people and communities everywhere. Given the growing threats posed by the pandemic to peace and security, Fiji supported the call of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire and welcomed General Assembly resolution 74/270 on global solidarity to fight COVID-19. Vaccines, therapeutics and equipment must be a global public good. It was time to consider a significant stimulus for the United Nations system to enable it to support small countries that were uniquely disadvantaged by the pandemic in protecting the most vulnerable communities.

100. **Ms. Hussain** (Maldives) said that, for small island developing States such as Maldives, whose economies were almost entirely dependent on the tourism sector, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic would extend far beyond the immediate health crisis. Her country was grateful for initiatives to combat the pandemic, such as the COVAX Global Vaccine Access Facility, which demonstrated the strength of multilateralism. The vaccine should be a public good for the greater benefit of all.

101. Her Government's response to COVID-19 was being led by women. The Government had taken substantial steps as part of its commitment to gender equality, including the recent withdrawal of several reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the amendment of the Local Councils Act to allocate one third of all council seats to women and the appointment of the first two female Supreme Court Justices. The adoption of the Child Rights Protection Act and the Juvenile Justice Act in 2019 were recent examples of efforts to bring national legal instruments into line with the international obligations of Maldives.

102. Although climate justice remained a top priority for Maldives, it was yet another area of sustainable development in which previous substantial progress would be lost during the pandemic. Part of a gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda was the recognition that women and girls were disproportionately more susceptible to climate change and natural disasters. Developmental gains must be distributed equitably, as the Sustainable Development Goals could not be achieved without gender equality.

103. In the context of worsening inequality, it was more important than ever to address human rights violations around the world. Maldives denounced the systematic violations committed against the Rohingya people. It was also deeply concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and reiterated its call for an internationally agreed two-State solution. Maldives condemned all acts of intolerance and hate crimes within communities and on online platforms, including xenophobia, Islamophobia, terrorism and violent extremism.

104. China had been an important development partner, and the relationship between China and Maldives was based on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Maldives therefore reiterated its firm commitment to the one-China policy and was confident that, under the principle of one country, two systems, the Chinese people would continue to prosper

and enjoy economic benefits and universally accepted fundamental freedoms.

105. **Mr. García Paz y Miño** (Ecuador) said that, in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, a people-centred response must be pursued in order to achieve more equitable and resilient results for all. Structural transformation in economic and social policies should continue to be promoted to enable better distribution of income and wealth within societies.

106. The pandemic had aggravated existing inequalities for women and girls. The participation, protection and potential of all women and girls should be at the centre of response efforts. His country was concerned by the effects of the pandemic on the well-being, development and protection of children, including their access to education, nutrition, security and health.

107. The risks faced by indigenous peoples during the pandemic were alarming. It was vital to include indigenous peoples in response measures; to guarantee their access to medicines, vaccines, medical equipment and medical care; to respect their human rights; and to provide them with adequate and accessible information, including in indigenous languages.

108. While the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations was being celebrated, multilateralism, the United Nations system and the protection of human rights were under considerable attack. Constant attempts were being made to weaken international cooperation and undermine the work of the United Nations despite the urgent challenges facing the world, including large-scale human rights abuse, climate change, prolonged humanitarian crises, widespread poverty and growing inequalities, disinformation and attacks on science and scientific knowledge, and threats to peace and international security. His Government had full faith in multilateralism as a coherent framework for working towards the promotion and protection of human rights. It hoped that the world would emerge from the pandemic as a more equitable place and show that a health emergency could result in enormous support for solving social problems and protecting and promoting human rights.

109. *Ms. Bogyay (Hungary) resumed the Chair.*

110. **Ms. Oh Hyunjoo** (Republic of Korea) said that her Government was endeavouring to ensure that the COVID-19 crisis would not set back its hard-won achievements in the advancement of women's rights and had strengthened its approach of mainstreaming gender in various policies. To further engage with international efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence in conflict situations, the Government had launched, in

2018, the Action with Women and Peace initiative, under which assistance was provided to survivors in post-conflict situations in Asia and Africa, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration. Following the first International Conference on Action with Women and Peace, held in Seoul in 2019, the Republic of Korea would host the second conference virtually in November 2020, focused on a survivor-centred approach. The Government had been endeavouring to restore the honour and dignity of the “comfort women” victims of the Second World War.

111. The protection of vulnerable and marginalized groups was among the main focuses of the Government’s social development agenda. In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, which had disproportionately affected vulnerable populations and worsened inequality and discrimination, the Government had been giving special attention to vulnerable groups and had adopted policies to protect employment opportunities. Vulnerable groups should be fully engaged in relevant discussions and decision-making processes and in the implementation of relevant policies to ensure that their rights and needs were adequately addressed and accommodated.

112. One of the first countries to be hit by COVID-19, the Republic of Korea had managed to flatten the curve. Human rights had been one of the key components of the Government’s COVID-19 policies. The extensive and integrated digital infrastructure in the country had been particularly vital in promoting and encouraging civic engagement in the responses.

113. Her Government had been working with the international community for substantive improvement of the human rights situation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. That country should continue to engage with the international community, including by participating in the universal periodic review and implementing the recommendations resulting from the review. Regarding the recent killing of an unarmed civilian of the Republic of Korea by the military of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the Yellow Sea, her Government hoped that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea would respond to its request for a thorough joint investigation into the incident and reopen the bilateral military communication line.

114. **Mr. Flynn** (Ireland) said that his country was honoured to have been elected to the Security Council, and it emphatically rejected the argument that human rights did not belong on the Council’s agenda. Accountability would be a watchword of its term on the

Council. Ireland firmly supported the vital mission of the International Criminal Court.

115. Continuing attacks against human rights defenders, journalists and media workers were a cause of concern. All States must create a safe and enabling environment for civil society and take steps to prevent acts of reprisal and intimidation. In the era of fake news and disinformation, the value of professional journalism had never been so important in upholding human rights. Ireland strongly condemned all forms of persecution of individuals on the basis of their religion or belief. All countries should promote freedom of thought, conscience and religion and respect the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities. All countries should fully cooperate with and provide unrestricted access to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. Ireland remained steadfastly opposed to the death penalty and called on all countries that had not abolished the death penalty to introduce a moratorium as a first step towards its abolition.

116. As Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2018 and 2019, Ireland had endeavoured to build consensus across the United Nations to advance global commitments relating to gender equality. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Member States should redouble efforts to overcome the global challenge of gender inequality. Ireland would continue to prioritize the rights of adolescent girls and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. As a member of the Security Council, Ireland would continue to prioritize the women and peace and security agenda, including addressing the persistent scar of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.

117. In recent years, his Government had launched national strategies to support the promotion and protection of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Ireland remained concerned at the oppressive measures taken against those persons in far too many States, but commended those countries that were amending their laws in accordance with the basic principles of human rights and equality.

118. **Ms. Sánchez de Cruz** (Dominican Republic) said that any COVID-19 vaccine that proved to be effective, together with other technologies to combat the pandemic, should be made accessible to all. WHO, donor countries and the private sector all had a key role to play in that regard.

119. On the issue of disability, all institutions and companies in her country had been given access to a

national digital system for assessing and monitoring accessibility. Accessible tourism was also being promoted. With a view to enhancing teaching and learning for persons with hearing impairments, a Dominican sign language dictionary had been developed.

120. The President of the Dominican Republic had declared that violence against women was a national problem that required concerted prevention efforts by all public institutions, legal practitioners and civil society. A programme of priority actions had been approved with the aim of developing a State policy for preventing, addressing, punishing, eradicating and redressing violence against women through a commitment to zero tolerance for violence. Improving the 24-hour emergency line for women victims of violence was a priority.

121. The extended school day programme, whereby pupils were in class from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and received breakfast, a snack and lunch on the school premises for free, was in place at 68 per cent of schools in her country. Various programmes and agreements were in place to protect and educate young people, with priority given to their inclusion in various discussion forums. The Dominican Republic had youth homes that provided shelter to young people in vulnerable situations and helped them to find their first job. The Ministry of Youth, together with UNFPA, had launched a national youth plan for the period up to 2030, which included a scholarship programme that helped young women to obtain graduate, master's and doctoral degrees in the sciences. The Government was addressing the drugs problem through prevention campaigns targeting young people. At the Security Council, the Dominican Republic, together with France, had initiated resolution [2535 \(2020\)](#), aimed at supporting and recognizing the efforts of young people in the maintenance of peace and security, which had been adopted by consensus.

122. **Mr. John Kyovi Mutua** (Kenya) said that his country reiterated its support for a global coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic and appreciated the key role played by WHO in countering and containing the spread of the virus. Concerted efforts were needed to find a treatment and a vaccine that would be affordable and accessible for all.

123. His delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights through universally accepted mechanisms. A National Human Rights Commission had been established in Kenya to champion the rights of the most vulnerable and ensure a rights-based approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

124. His Government was working diligently to prevent any pushback to advancements in gender equality and women's empowerment, as women had been disproportionately disadvantaged by COVID-19. A national task force had been established to work towards the eradication of gender-based violence and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation. Children had also been adversely affected by COVID-19. Many did not have access to distance learning facilities and had been victims or witnesses of domestic violence and abuse. His Government had set up child protection centres, where victims of abuse could receive essential services. It had also developed an emergency education response plan for the safe reopening of schools and introduced free-to-air local television and radio stations to support educational services. International cooperation was needed to strengthen and guarantee access to inclusive education through digital technologies in developing and least developed countries.

125. His Government was committed to achieving universal health coverage by 2022. Efforts were under way to reduce the cost of medical coverage, while there were also plans to increase health expenditure. Social protection programmes such as the national safety net programme and the Uwezo Fund provided funds to low-income households, women, orphans, vulnerable children, young people and persons with disabilities.

126. Kenya reaffirmed its commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Member States should respect, protect and fulfil all human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of African descent and ensure greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse culture and contribution of those people.

127. His country remained committed to inclusive and people-centred development and called for the concerted use of information technology to help developing and least developed countries to achieve developmental goals. Through multilateralism, it would be possible to transcend the challenges facing the world and work towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

128. **Ms. Pejanović Đurišić** (Montenegro) said that, in order to effectively respond to the consequences of COVID-19, human rights and the needs of those most affected must be respected in response and recovery efforts. Following the closure of schools during the crisis, her Government had developed a distance-learning initiative that provided more than 300 online courses and lessons in a number of subjects on national television channels. UNICEF and a mobile telecom provider had organized training on tools for distance

learning and the safe use of the Internet for children from vulnerable groups.

129. The debates to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had shown that no country had yet achieved gender equality. Despite the progress made in implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), whose twentieth anniversary also fell in 2020, further action was needed to ensure the inclusion of women in the peace and security agenda. Analyses had shown that women made essential contributions as front-line responders but were hit harder by the health, economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. Efforts must therefore be redoubled to build women's resilience. More than ever before, there must be zero tolerance of domestic violence.

130. Montenegro had become the first European Union candidate country from the Western Balkans to give legal recognition to same-sex partnerships. The Same-Sex Life Partnership Act, adopted in July 2020, was the result of joint efforts of the Government and civil society organizations. The existing strategy for improving the quality of life of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons for the period 2019–2023 demonstrated the continuity of the country's determination to achieve inclusiveness and equality.

131. Her Government continued to ensure an inclusive public health and socioeconomic response for everyone, while being aware of the need to protect the rights of refugees and displaced persons. Montenegro was deeply concerned by the impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities and in that regard welcomed the WHO guidelines and the policy brief of the Secretary-General on a disability-inclusive response to COVID-19. During the outbreak, the Red Cross of Montenegro, together with a network of volunteers and social care centres, had provided food and medicines to those in need. The international community must work together to ensure that human rights were at the centre of all COVID-19 responses and that no one was left behind.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

132. **Mr. Al Khalil** (Syrian Arab Republic), responding to comments made at the previous meeting by the representatives of Germany and the United States (see [A/C.3/75/SR.4](#)), said that it was shameful and ironic that certain States that proclaimed their attachment to human rights refused to repatriate their own women and child citizens who had travelled to Syria as foreign terrorist fighters with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Those Governments had gone so far as to strip citizenship from their own nationals who had been

contemplating a return to their home countries. Derelict in their duty to repatriate, hold accountable and rehabilitate their citizens, those States had failed the moral test.

133. On 31 August 2020, the Security Council had adopted a draft resolution on counter-terrorism. In that resolution, the Council should have helped to bridge a significant gap in that regard by demanding that Member States repatriate, prosecute and rehabilitate terrorists engaging in operations across borders – referred to by some as foreign terrorist fighters – thereby ridding the country to which they had travelled of those fighters. Regrettably, the negotiations on the resolution had demonstrated the obstinacy of certain European countries on the Council, including Germany, with its selfish, irresponsible position of refusing to repatriate and hold accountable its nationals who had perpetrated terrorist acts, and its immoral refusal to accept responsibility for those acts.

134. As all were aware, his country had been the target of a brutal terrorist war for years. The United States representative's expressions of concern at the deteriorating living conditions of the Syrian people and the attribution of those conditions to what she termed the Syrian regime resembled political schizophrenia when considered against the backdrop of the theft by the United States of 200,000 barrels of oil and 400,000 tons of cotton from the Syrian Government daily; its setting fire to thousands of hectares of wheat; its looting of 5,000,000 heads of cattle; its boasts of the division of the Syrian people and the deliberate weakening of the country's currency; the imposition of unilateral coercive measures on the Syrian people; the occupation of parts of Syrian territory and the protection of Turkey, a United States ally, as it occupied other regions. Indeed, the very fact that the United States president had openly boasted of his administration's plot to assassinate the Syrian president was indicative of the depths to which political thought and conduct had degenerated.

135. **Mr. Sharma** (India) said that his delegation condemned the baseless, out-of-context comments made by the representative of Pakistan at the previous meeting (see [A/C.3/75/SR.4](#)). The world did not need lessons in human rights and democracy from a country that was renowned for being the hub of terrorism in the region, that had brought genocide to South Asia 39 years previously and that provided State-funded pensions to listed terrorists and hosted the largest number of terrorists listed by the United Nations. His delegation doubted that the international community could trust a country whose Prime Minister had called the terrorist Osama Bin Laden a martyr in Parliament in July 2020. That country had also encouraged the killing of fellow

Muslims merely because they belonged to a different sect or region, sponsored terrorist attacks against its neighbours and systematically cleansed its minorities. Pakistan should not use religion or ideology to tarnish countries with pluralistic and democratic structures, such as India, where a wide spectrum of views and opinions could be heard.

136. His delegation completely rejected the malicious reference made to Jammu and Kashmir, which was an integral and inalienable part of India. At the United Nations, the principle of self-determination had always been used solely in the context of decolonization; it could not be abused and misinterpreted to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a Member State. Since all Indian laws had been extended to Jammu and Kashmir, its residents had been enjoying greater freedoms and fundamental rights, and women in particular had more rights and freedoms than ever.

137. Pakistan should stop cross-border terrorism and thus enable citizens to exercise their right to life and liberty.

138. **Mr. Butt** (Pakistan) said that the rise of fascism in India was no accident. After all, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was the longest running fascist movement in the world. As a result of the politics of hate espoused by the current rulers of India, vulnerability was being woven into the very fabric of Indian society, where high-caste Hindus regularly preyed upon the rights of people belonging to lower castes and other minorities. Through patently discriminatory and bigoted citizenship laws, the regime of the Bharatiya Janata Party and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh had codified the choice between the extermination or the total submission of minorities in India. It was not surprising that India had been forced to take extreme steps, such as shutting down credible voices, including that of Amnesty International, and denying access to illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir by humanitarian organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, to hide the fact that it was a fascist, xenophobic and majoritarian State masquerading as a democracy.

139. No amount of brute force, including arbitrary arrests and detention, torture and extrajudicial killings, could ever take away the desire for freedom of the oppressed people of Jammu and Kashmir. Since India had no defence for the atrocities committed by its occupying forces in illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, it had tried in vain to malign Pakistan. His country would always support the just struggle of Kashmiris for self-determination until they had won freedom from Indian occupation.

140. **Mr. González Behmaras** (Cuba), responding to comments made at the previous meeting by the representative of the United States (see [A/C.3/75/SR.4](#)), said that his delegation emphatically rejected the reference made to the human rights situation in a list of countries, including Cuba. Instead of hurling accusations against countries and drawing up unilateral lists, for which the United States had no mandate or moral authority, the delegation of the United States would do better to list the major human rights challenges faced by its own country and explain how it intended to solve them. The General Assembly would be very interested to know, for example, how the United States intended to solve the systemic structural racism faced daily by persons of African descent in that country or to close the salary gap that discriminated against women. That delegation did nothing but contribute to politicization and confrontation. To make progress in the promotion of human rights for all, the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-discrimination must be prioritized. Either the delegation of the United States was ignorant of those principles or it was deliberately flouting them.

141. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), responding to comments made at the previous meeting by the representative of the United States (see [A/C.3/75/SR.4](#)), said that his delegation rejected the statements made regarding the internal political situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as blatant interference in the internal affairs of a free, independent and sovereign State. His delegation reiterated its denunciation of the crimes against humanity committed with total impunity on a daily basis by the Government of the United States against more than one third of humanity, including 30 million Venezuelans through the illegal imposition of unilateral coercive measures, even amid the worst pandemic in the past 100 years. Such a policy was intended to generate the greatest pain and suffering possible, which was a crime of extermination under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Those responsible for that inhuman policy within the Government of the United States must be brought to justice and held accountable for their crimes. The United States had even penalized members of the International Criminal Court in an attempt to prevent investigation of the crimes committed by that State around the world. It had no moral authority to speak on behalf of international law, given its systematic violation of international law and its failure to meet its legally binding obligations.

142. With regard to the report of the so-called independent international fact-finding mission on the

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which was made up of supposed experts, some of whom had supported bloody dictatorships in the region, his delegation rejected it as mere propaganda that exploited human rights for political ends. The report was selective and biased, and ignored the reality in the country and the structural causes of the situation faced by the people of Venezuela.

143. Regarding the recent flow of migrants triggered by the economic, commercial and financial blockade illegally imposed by the United States on his country, large numbers of Venezuelans were voluntarily returning to their country in search of refuge and State protection, fleeing the discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance that they had suffered, even amid the COVID-19 pandemic, in so-called welcoming countries, especially in the region. The delegations of the United States and Czechia should remember that Venezuela was a free, independent and sovereign State that would never accept tutelage or any kind of interference in its internal affairs, which should be managed solely by the Venezuelan people through political dialogue and participatory democracy in the framework of the Constitution. The Venezuelan people would never give in to blackmail or pressure.

144. **Mr. Dai Bing** (China), responding to comments made at the previous meeting by the representative of the United States of America (see [A/C.3/75/SR.4](#)), said that the United States had not learned its lesson from the abject failure of its campaign against his country, nor had it heeded the just call of Member States for solidarity and cooperation. Instead, the representative of the United States had once again levelled unwarranted, baseless accusations against China, which his delegation categorically rejected.

145. Discrediting China and playing the blame game over COVID-19 was futile, wrong and irresponsible. China had brought COVID-19 under control and its citizens were able to take domestic trips and enjoy safe and happy lives. By contrast, the United States had recorded over 7 million cases to date. China upheld its heroes, awarding top scientist Zhong Nanshan with the Order of the Republic and honouring doctor Li Wenliang as a martyr. The United States should respect its medical experts, such as Anthony Fauci, and ensure fair treatment for whistle-blowers, such as Brett Crozier, the former captain of the USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier. China put human rights at the centre of its efforts to combat COVID-19. From centenarians to newborn babies, patients had been given a new lease of life after receiving the best treatment possible. Meanwhile, more than 210,000 people in the United States had lost their lives to the disease. The people of the United States were

owed an explanation as to why their country was number one in the world in terms of the number of confirmed cases and the death toll.

146. Xinjiang had 24,400 mosques, more than 10 times the number of mosques in the United States. From 2010 to 2018, the Uighur population in Xinjiang had increased by more than 25 per cent. The claims of religious oppression and forced sterilization in Xinjiang were sheer fabrications. Not a single one of the thousands of visitors to Xinjiang each year had ever seen the so-called concentration camps, in which 1 million Uighurs were purported to be incarcerated.

147. Beginning in 2019, Hong Kong had been ravished by violent riots to the immense distress of its people. No sovereign State would have sat idly by. Since the Hong Kong National Security Act had been in place, 80 per cent of the local population considered Hong Kong a safer place. His delegation hoped that the joint statement made by 55 countries in support of China on the issue of Hong Kong had been heard by the United States.

148. The United States had been practising “America first” left, right and centre in international affairs. It had pulled the rug from under WHO at a critical juncture and had been unleashing wars and imposing unilateral sanctions everywhere, causing hundreds of thousands of innocent civilian casualties, displacing millions of people and starving tens of millions of people of food and medicine. The United States had no right to chastise other countries for human rights issues.

149. The Chinese people were best placed to describe the human rights situation in China. The approval rating of the Government of China was over 90 per cent. The United States should drop its Cold War mentality and desist from spreading lies and its political virus.

150. **Mr. Knyazyan** (Armenia), responding to the statement made at the previous meeting by the representative of Azerbaijan (see [A/C.3/75/SR.4](#)), said that his delegation resolutely rejected the false narratives of Azerbaijan regarding the root causes of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the fundamental principles of its settlement. The democratic State-building and the remarkable progress made in promoting the rule of law and upholding fundamental human rights in Nagorno-Karabakh stood in stark contrast to the poor record of Azerbaijan, which had failed to create accountable and representative State institutions and a just and inclusive modern society. The dire human rights situation in Azerbaijan had been well-documented by international organizations and human rights bodies, including Freedom House, which had stated in its 2020 report that power in the authoritarian regime of Azerbaijan remained heavily concentrated in

the hands of the President and his extended family; corruption was rampant; the political opposition had been weakened by years of persecution; and an extensive crackdown on civil liberties had been carried out by the authorities in recent years.

151. Azerbaijan used its so-called concept of multiculturalism to conceal its restrictive practices against national minorities and its policy of hatred of Armenians. As stated by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in its fourth opinion on Azerbaijan, the general restrictions on democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the country had had an adverse effect on civil society, and persons belonging to national minorities expressing critical views against the authorities experienced intimidation, arrest and imprisonment.

152. The ongoing military aggression by Azerbaijan against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, accompanied by war crimes and atrocity crimes, including targeted shelling of the civilian population and infrastructure and the use of prohibited weaponry, left no doubt about the genocidal intentions of Azerbaijan. The people of Nagorno-Karabakh were struggling for their physical survival, self-determination, democracy and human rights in opposition to authoritarianism. It was not the authorities that had inherited power that would be able to contribute to reconciliation, regional peace and stability, but those that had been formed by and were accountable to the people.

153. The destabilizing actions of Turkey constituted a serious threat to peace and security in a wide region, encompassing the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and the South Caucasus. Armenia condemned the Turkish policy of exporting violence and instability and its direct military involvement in the aggression against the people of Artsakh. The recruitment and transfer of foreign terrorist fighters and mercenaries by Turkey to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone were no secret. The involvement of international terrorists in the hostilities had been addressed by the international community at the level of Heads of State and Government, heads of law enforcement agencies, independent observers and the international media. As the guarantor of the security of the people of Artsakh, Armenia would take all steps necessary to ensure their rights to life and to live freely and in dignity in their ancestral homeland.

154. **Mr. Magosaki** (Japan), responding to comments made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the previous meeting (see [A/C.3/75/SR.4](#)), said that the claims made regarding Japan were groundless and based on factual errors.

There was no policy, rule or government measure that allowed discrimination against Korean residents in Japan. On the contrary, the Government had been developing approaches to eliminate discriminatory behaviours against persons originating from outside Japan. For over 70 years, since the end of the Second World War, Japan had regarded the facts of history in a spirit of humility, had consistently respected democracy and human rights, and had contributed to the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and the international community as a whole. Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should bring true peace to North-East Asia by overcoming mutual mistrust and deepening cooperation. Japan called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to work together with Japan for a bright future.

155. **The Chair** said that, because of the late hour, the interpreters would be dismissed, and the discussion would continue in English.

156. **Mr. Kim** Nam Hyok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation categorically rejected the accusations made by Japan. In the past century, Japan had committed crimes against humanity, such as forcibly drafting and abducting 8.4 million young and middle-aged Koreans, committing genocide against 1 million innocent Koreans and forcing 200,000 Korean women and girls into military sexual slavery. Nevertheless, Japan had not sincerely recognized its past inhuman crimes. The Government of Japan continued to oppress and discriminate against the descendants of Korean victims. Korean students in Japan had recently been the target of a national discriminatory policy that excluded them from a free education programme. Japan must end its politically motivated campaign against his country, take sincere steps to apologize and provide due compensation for its past crimes, and stop all acts of discrimination against Korean residents in Japan.

157. His delegation also totally rejected the allegations made by the Republic of Korea. The authorities of that country should immediately end all politically motivated human rights campaigns against his country.

158. **Mr. Na** Sang Deok (Republic of Korea) said that the statement by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea included groundless accusations against his Government. The recent inhuman killing of an innocent citizen of the Republic of Korea by the military of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the Yellow Sea could not be tolerated. His Government called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to respond to its request for

a joint investigation into the incident and to restore the bilateral military communication line.

159. **Mr. Magosaki** (Japan) said that it was disappointing that the reply of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had been groundless and contained factual errors. Japan sincerely hoped that it would be possible for the two countries to overcome their mutual mistrust.

160. **Mr. Kim** Nam Hyok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that Japan should take responsibility for its past crimes and provide a sincere apology and compensation to all victims. There could be no bright future in the relationship between the two countries unless Japan completely compensated for its past crimes and stopped discriminating against Korean residents in Japan.

161. The authorities of the Republic of Korea should end the campaign against his country in the international arena and fully implement its obligations and responsibilities in accordance with the relevant agreements between the two countries.

162. **Ms. Mehdiyeva** (Azerbaijan) said that it had become commonplace for the delegation of Armenia to abuse the platform of the General Assembly and its Committees to provoke confrontation, further its heinous racist agenda and spread its shameless lies. The comments made by the representative of Armenia about Azerbaijan stood in stark contrast to reality. The most recent attacks by Armenia had followed a pattern of inflammatory statements and actions by its leadership against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and had evidently been premeditated. Over the past months, the leaders of Armenia had been threatening to strike Ganja and to hit the Mingachevir reservoir dam and hydropower plant. Ganja had been attacked on 4 and 5 October, and a missile attack had been launched against the industrial city of Mingachevir on 4 October.

163. From 25 to 31 August 2020, the wife of the Prime Minister of Armenia had participated in a combat preparedness training course held at her own initiative in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan within the framework of her so-called Women for Peace campaign, which allegedly sought to promote the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijan would be interested to know what the so-called peace-loving First Lady of Armenia had been training for in the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan.

164. In July 2020, the Armenian armed forces had launched a cross-border attack lasting several days and

targeting densely populated areas in Tovuz district, which had geostrategic significance because of the critical transport and energy routes passing through it.

165. On 30 March 2019, the Minister of Defence of Armenia had publicly announced a strategic doctrine of "a new war for new territories", declaring that Armenia would no longer be a defensive State and that units might be added to shift the military action to the territory of the enemy. Defending those remarks, the Prime Minister of Armenia had stated that he would have dismissed the Minister if the Minister had made a different statement. At a news conference on 24 July 2018, the Deputy Chief of General Staff, in charge of the Armenian occupying forces, had threatened Azerbaijan with missile strikes against civilian infrastructure.

166. Armenian leaders unscrupulously glorified violence and honoured convicted criminals as national heroes, including Garegin Ter-Harutyunyan, nicknamed Nzhdeh, a Nazi collaborator during the Second World War who had died in prison in 1955 and whose monument had been unveiled in Yerevan in 2016; Varoujan Garabedian, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment in a European country for a terrorist act that had claimed the lives of 8 people and injured 55 others; and Monte Melkonian, another well-known international terrorist who had spent six years in prison in the same European country and, after his release, had killed and expelled Azerbaijani civilians until he had been liquidated by the Azerbaijani military in 1993.

167. For decades, the Armenian leadership had sought to alter the demographic composition of the Nagorno-Karabakh region by illegally settling ethnic Armenians from the Middle East and other parts of the world in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, while simultaneously engaging in a campaign of forcibly expelling and preventing the return of the Azerbaijani inhabitants of those territories, in clear breach of article 49 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The conflict had resulted in the forcible expulsion of more than 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes and properties in both Armenia and the Azerbaijani territory occupied by Armenia.

168. Even the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had not prevented the armed provocations of Armenia. The statement of Armenia regarding its alleged support for and adherence to the appeal of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire was clearly nothing but utter falsehood. Contrary to its claims, Armenia had never been interested in meaningful dialogue and was a textbook example of terrorism, racism and a human rights fiasco.

169. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that her delegation refuted the statement of Armenia in its entirety. The current outbreak of hostilities was the direct consequence of the consistent provocations by Armenia on the ground, its complete disregard of international law and its blatant violation of Security Council resolutions. Azerbaijan had been exercising its right of self-defence, given that the hostilities were taking place exclusively on its sovereign territory. Armenia should uphold without delay the relevant Council resolutions on the conflict and withdraw from the territories that it had illegally occupied. Her country had adopted a consistent attitude towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and would continue to support a solution based on international law, within the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The baseless and absurd claims of Armenia were no more credible than its well-known practice of distorting historical events.

170. There were no human rights lessons to be learned from the representative of a regime that had massacred and tortured the Syrian people for more than nine years. More than 9 million Syrians were under the protection of Turkey, and nearly 5 million of them lived right across the border between Turkey and Syria. Those people were not represented by that speaker. Turkey would continue to stand in full solidarity with the Syrian people, who were the victims of the war crimes of the regime.

171. **Mr. Knyazyan** (Armenia) said that the statements quoted by the representative of Azerbaijan proved the resolve of the Armenian leadership to ensure the physical security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh from the existential threat posed by Azerbaijan. The representative of Azerbaijan, who had tried to distort the root causes of the conflict, had failed to mention that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh had gained independence in the context of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, in full compliance with international law. On 10 December 1991, the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh had adopted a declaration of independence and held a referendum in strict accordance with the law. The Azerbaijani authorities had responded to the peaceful aspirations of the people of the region with brutal force. The conflict had begun in 1988 with the pogrom of the Armenian population in Sumgait, which was the first identity-based atrocity crime in Europe after the Second World War. The despicable allegations of ethnic cleansing were nothing short of cynicism coming from a country whose very foundation had been built on premeditated mass atrocities against the Armenian population in Baku, Nakhichevan, Agulis and Shushi 100 years previously. The total elimination of

Armenians continued to be at the core of the modern State-building of Azerbaijan.

172. The political-military leadership of Azerbaijan bore full responsibility for the consequences of its aggression, which was incompatible with international law and the core values of humanity and represented a serious challenge to regional peace and stability. The desperate attempts of Azerbaijan to attribute to Armenia the recruitment of mercenaries testified to the gravity of the allegations of a number of world leaders regarding the transfer of foreign terrorist fighters by Turkey to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. The only positive role that Turkey could play in the conflict was to immediately withdraw its forces, personnel and equipment and Turkish-backed terrorists from the region.

173. **Mr. Al Khalil** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Turkish Parliament had, that morning, approved a motion to extend the mandate for the deployment of troops in Iraq and his country for another year. First approved by Parliament in October 2014, the mandate had been renewed every year since, which was clear proof that Turkey, as represented by its President, Government and Parliament, was pursuing a criminal ideology, and it also confirmed the validity of the statement made by his delegation and others regarding Turkish aggression.

174. **Ms. Mehdiyeva** (Azerbaijan) said that the representative of Armenia had once again demonstrated how detached his delegation was from reality and how prejudiced its views towards her country were. Azerbaijan was fighting within its internationally recognized territories and exercising its right of self-defence to repulse the military attacks of the foreign aggressor and restore its territorial integrity. Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan had never laid claims to the territories of other States, but had built good-neighbourly relationships and partnerships and contributed to socioeconomic development in the region. Armenia had done nothing but attack its neighbours, create distrust, isolate itself and deny its own people their right to development.

175. Since the outbreak of the most recent hostilities, the President of Azerbaijan had declared on several occasions that Azerbaijan did not target civilians and had emphasized that Azerbaijanis and Armenians needed to be able to live together in peace. Meanwhile, on 6 October, in an interview on the Russian television channel Russia-1, the military adviser to the Prime Minister of Armenia had admitted that the armed forces of Armenia had been shelling civilian towns to create panic. It had been clear from the outset that the

Armenian military adventurism was unsustainable and would inevitably lead to war. In its press release of 24 September 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan had highlighted that the bellicose statements and military and other provocations of Armenia showed that it was preparing for a new military aggression against Azerbaijan, and had called on the international community to urge Armenia to refrain from further aggression.

176. Members of the Azerbaijani community of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, who were victims of the Armenian occupation and ethnic cleansing, had been waiting for 30 years to return to their homes. Armenia had violated all their rights, denied their existence and rejected their proposals for intercommunity dialogue with the Armenian community of the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

177. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that the representative of the Syrian regime had once again abused the Committee's platform to distort the facts and falsely accuse her country, and her delegation rejected the statement made by that representative in its entirety. Her delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Azerbaijan and rejected the allegations made by the representative of Armenia in their entirety.

The meeting rose at 6.45 p.m.