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Chair: Mr. Tafrov..... (Bulgaria)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (A/68/121)

(a) Advancement of women (A/68/38, A/68/178, A/68/179, A/68/184 and A/68/340)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/68/175)

1. **Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka** (Executive Director and Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (A/68/178), the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/68/179) and measures taken and progress achieved in the promotion of women and political participation (A/68/184), said that the only goal was to realize the promise of the Charter of the United Nations on the equal rights of men and women. Parents increasingly wanted the same opportunities for their sons and daughters, and there was a general consensus on the need to end violence against women and girls. However, women's and girls' lives continued to be threatened, while their rights were violated. She looked forward to the day when people would not believe how much violence and discrimination women had once faced. Joint action would help to make the twenty-first century the century of women.

2. The theme of the International Day of the Girl Child for 2013 was innovating for girls' education. The best way to reduce family poverty was to educate both sons and daughters, but the barriers to girls' enrolment in school persisted, including poverty, gender-based discrimination and violence. It was a tragedy that so many girls were married at an early age. UN-Women and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts had jointly launched Voices against Violence, an innovative non-formal education curriculum on ending violence against women and girls which put young people at the heart of efforts to prevent violence and discrimination. The initiative was due to reach more than 5 million children by 2020.

3. Noting that the report on violence against women migrant workers focused on human rights violations against girls not only by recruitment officers and human traffickers but also by law-enforcement officers,

she urged Member States to ratify the International Labour Organization Domestic Workers Convention.

4. As the International Day of Rural Women approached, she recalled that rural women played a key role in food production and in ensuring the well-being of families and communities. However, obstacles remained to their full participation in socioeconomic and political life. She called for legal reforms to allow women, including widows, to own the land they worked, and for a reduction of the unpaid work burden of rural women.

5. Turning to women's political participation, she pointed out that women comprised a mere 17 per cent of Ministers around the world and that only eight elected Heads of State were women. In the recent general debate, only 14 women had addressed the General Assembly. Despite quota and other programmes already in place, many obstacles remained to women's participation in political life, including stereotypes and lack of support by political parties. There was a need to invest in educational tools to support women's aspirations to enter political life, including in situations of transition.

6. The report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/68/175) stressed that advancing gender equality was a collective endeavour, and that all stakeholders, including Governments, the private sector and civil society, should work together to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment became a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda.

7. **Ms. Loew** (Switzerland), noting the importance of participation by UN-Women in the proceedings of the General Assembly, asked how the entity planned to ensure that the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action were integrated into the post-2015 development agenda. Her delegation wished to hear the Executive Director's views on the best ways of involving men and boys in the fight for gender equality and what models of genuine gender partnership existed.

8. **Ms. Strachwitz** (Liechtenstein) said that her Government supported making empowering girls and women and achieving gender equality a stand-alone goal of the post-2015 development agenda. She asked

what specific targets would be established to achieve that ambitious goal.

9. **Ms. Vadiati** (Islamic Republic of Iran) asked how the Executive Director intended to mainstream family-based values in the UN-Women Strategic Plan.

10. **Mr. Jiddou** (Mauritania), referring to the report contained in document [A/68/179](#), asked how UN-Women had evaluated international efforts to improve the situation of women in rural areas.

11. **Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka** (Executive Director and Under-Secretary-General, UN-Women) said that UN-Women was fully engaged in efforts to define the post-2015 development agenda. A comprehensive paper had already been issued on the need to establish and mainstream women's empowerment and gender equality as a stand-alone target. Consultations with Member States, United Nations agencies and civil society were in progress, as were advocacy efforts directed at Governments to ensure that gender equality would be at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda.

12. On the integration of men and boys into efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls, she said that they were critical constituencies, who historically had been neglected. Efforts were being made to identify male champions of women's rights, in men's organizations, sports and various political and professional domains, as well as women's organizations. She cited the exemplary community work in that regard being done by men and boys in Malawi.

13. Turning to the use of targets to enhance the participation of women, she emphasized that in political processes it was important to identify the right women for given jobs. As for mainstreaming family values into the work of UN-Women, she noted their articulation in the framework of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing+20 review, which served as the basis for the work of UN-Women. Its work was already facilitated by family and religious organizations, and through cooperation with community chiefs and traditional leaders. There was no universal solution but the agreed normative documents should be taken as guides.

14. On the question of progress in the advancement of women, she said that many concerns remained, in particular regarding gender-based violence and abuse.

The unprecedented participation in the high-level side event on female genital mutilation organized by UN-Women during the general debate demonstrated that progress had been made in that regard. Whereas it was important not to underestimate successes, vigilance remained necessary.

15. **Ms. Ameline** (Chair, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that everyone recognized that women were at the forefront of progress, growth and peace but bore the brunt of violence, suffering and conflict. Noting that the General Assembly was taking action to strengthen the United Nations treaty bodies, she said that the Committee acted as a catalyst and needed support to reinforce its role. It took pride in its consistent efforts to enhance cost efficiency and work quality. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been ratified almost universally and the Committee had reviewed more than 400 State reports, but it was time to close the implementation gap. She urged Governments and the international community to make more effective use of the powerful tools offered by the Convention and the Committee's concluding observations.

16. The post-2015 development agenda provided a unique opportunity to place women's rights at the centre of the process to achieve fair and sustainable development, which could not exist without them. The Convention was the only universal treaty on the comprehensive protection of women's rights, but it was also a development instrument, providing for women's empowerment and participation, since women were the main drivers of development. Nevertheless, women continued to be underrepresented in political and public life and excluded from decision-making. It was therefore heartening to see that, in the outcome document of the Special Event towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals held in September 2013, Member States had resolved that the post-2015 development agenda should be based on human rights, with a particular focus on women's rights and gender equality.

17. The Committee was typically associated with its standard-setting and monitoring functions. In order to have a real impact on the ground, its concluding observations must be channelled into national policies and action taken by United Nations country teams. Accordingly, the Committee must capitalize more on its advisory role in support of the operational activities

of national and international actors. It must be more visible, especially in New York, where the gender and development entities of the United Nations were based. New partnerships were needed to build national capacities, including by mobilizing private funding. She called for an institutionalized relationship between the Committee and both UN-Women and the Commission on the Status of Women.

18. The Committee had requested additional resources to enable its Working Group on Communications to deal with a growing number of submissions in relation to inquiries under the Optional Protocol to Convention. She called on Member States to consider the financial implications not as additional costs but as an investment in the efficiency of the Committee's work and the protection of women's and girls' rights throughout the world.

19. **Ms. McCarthy** (United Kingdom) said that her Government was working to extend the application of human rights treaties, such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to the United Kingdom's overseas territories, supporting those that faced resource and capacity constraints. Her delegation would like to hear views on the best ways to encourage universal ratification of the Convention. The High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, recommended that empowering girls and women and achieving gender equality should be a stand-alone goal of the agenda and mainstreamed across it, and she asked how the Committee could best ensure that those issues were given a prominent place in the agenda.

20. **Ms. Kaljulate** (European Union) said that the European Union welcomed that recommendation of the High-Level Panel and called on the Committee to be proactive in that regard in cooperation with UN-Women. Referring to Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security, she asked how the Committee addressed the prevention of violence against women in its activities. The European Union called on States that had not adhered to the Convention and its Optional Protocol to do so, while those that had ratified the Convention should implement it in full.

21. **Ms. Loew** (Switzerland) said that her Government supported the request for additional financial resources to be allocated to the Committee with regard to the activities of the Working Group on

Communications. She asked how many more communications would be considered by the Committee if the request for extra funding were met.

22. **Mr. Hisajima** (Japan) asked for specific examples of the progress towards the elimination of discrimination against women as demonstrated by the country reports.

23. **Mr. Ponikvar** (Slovenia) said that his Government had recently enacted equal opportunity legislation and laid great emphasis on equality between women and men in its domestic and foreign policy. Referring to the theme of the International Day of the Girl Child, he asked whether States parties to the Convention reported on the innovative means of improving the education of girls and whether the Committee monitored such practices. In view of the Joint CEDAW-Committee on the Rights of the Child General Recommendation/Comment on Harmful Practices, what were the major obstacles to the prevention and elimination of harmful practices affecting women and girls around the world and how best could they be removed?

24. **Ms. Duncan-Villalobos** (Costa Rica) said that her Government supported the requested increase in the Committee's financial resources, as it should improve its cooperation with UN-Women. She asked for further information on the Committee's funding.

25. **Ms. Schoyen** (Norway) asked how the implementation tool constituted by the Committee's recommendations could be strengthened and the implementation gap closed. Welcoming the measures taken by the Committee to cut costs and increase efficiency, she expressed support for the request to increase meeting time in order to conduct inquiry procedures. Norway and the other Nordic countries would continue to support requests for additional resources to enable the Committee to fulfil its mandate.

26. **Ms. Diaz Gras** (Mexico) said that her country supported the strengthening of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies in general and, specifically with regard to the Committee, regularly and widely disseminated its recommendations, setting up relevant national mechanisms. She asked whether the additional resources requested would enable the Committee to meet all its obligations under the Convention and the Optional Protocol or whether further funding would be needed for it to meet all its responsibilities.

27. **Mr. Estreme** (Argentina) asked whether country reports submitted contained specific information on measures taken by Governments to address discrimination and violence directed at elderly women in particular. He wished to know what the Committee could do to raise awareness of the phenomenon.

28. **Ms. Ameline** (Chair, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that 187 Member States were parties to the Convention. A core objective of the Committee's future work was to urge all remaining States to adhere to it and call on States parties to lift any reservations. For the empowerment of women and girls, the Convention needed to be translated into operations on the ground by expanding partnerships and making them more coherent. The Committee was proactive and pragmatic in carrying out its tasks, and would continue to work towards full mainstreaming of women's rights into the post-2015 development agenda.

29. The Committee had modernized its working methods and sought cost savings by, inter alia, reducing the size of its reports and cutting translation costs. As far as the request for additional resources was concerned, the Committee considered it an investment. A greater presence in New York would enable it to link up with the Commission on the Status of Women and create partnerships with other entities as well as the Member States. As the international community defined the post-2015 development agenda, the Committee viewed 2014 as a decisive year for women's rights. The progress achieved in many countries cited in the country reports was substantial, but there was a need to share best practices and exchange information on how to apply the Committee's recommendations. Although improving girls' access to education was of key importance for development, the Committee's mandate was broader, including work on combating stereotyping. Emphasizing the importance of closing the implementation gap rather than elaborating new standards, she reiterated the need for investment in innovative practices and partnerships. All the treaty bodies faced backlogs in fulfilling their obligations and the Committee needed to be strengthened, possibly through the establishment of a second chamber. The Committee dedicated a great deal of time and effort to the communications before it and an extra session in New York would allow it to address some extremely important issues.

30. **Mr. Thomson** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, despite progress in gender equality and the empowerment of women, women and girls continued to face poverty, violence, extremism and discrimination and progress varied from region to region. It was essential to address the root causes and expedite action to resolve those problems. Since the eradication of poverty remained the biggest challenge facing developing countries, the Group of 77 and China affirmed the importance of promoting the economic empowerment of women and girls and their ability to generate income, while ensuring that they enjoyed equal treatment in the workplace and equal access to power and decision-making.

31. The Group called for intensified efforts at all levels to address trafficking in women and girls, which violated their fundamental human rights. Women were also more vulnerable in terms of health and it was important to address the effects of both communicable and non-communicable diseases on their health. The Group of 77 and China was also deeply concerned at the suffering of women and girls living under foreign occupation and called for collective actions to protect them.

32. Such global challenges as the economic and financial crisis, food insecurity, unilateral sanctions, impediments to international trade and climate change had further aggravated the situation of women and girls. It was therefore imperative to design stimulus packages and gender-responsive budgeting initiatives to address gender gaps. He reiterated the significance of full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in particular as the international community began to deliberate on the post-2015 development agenda.

33. **Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the decade 2010-2020 had been declared African Women's Decade and gender-parity principles had been adopted in all spheres. Efforts had been made to achieve gender balance in the high-level posts of the African Union. African leaders understood that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls was key to sustainable development, economic growth and peace and security.

34. Most African women lived in rural areas and therefore played a critical role in eradicating poverty and hunger. There was an urgent need to focus on their empowerment and on their full and equal participation

in decision-making on all levels. The international community must continue its efforts to strengthen policies prioritizing rural and agricultural development, while integrating gender perspectives into relevant development policies.

35. The African Group believed that legislation offered the right foundation for a holistic approach to addressing violence against women and girls. Many women worked in low-paid or unpaid domestic jobs that excluded them from the benefits of education and placed them at risk of violence. He called for the implementation of international commitments on official development assistance, transfer of technology, access to markets and on gender equality. Discrimination against women and gender inequality impeded progress in development, peace and security and the realization of human rights.

36. Emphasis should be placed on promoting education and health care for women and girls. In particular, he called on the international community to create an enabling environment to reduce the price of the drugs for treating HIV/AIDS. The African Group was committed to eliminating female genital mutilation, addressing illiteracy, combating trafficking in women and girls and reducing maternal mortality. There was an urgent need to address the social, economic, cultural and political factors that made people vulnerable to trafficking. African women must be heard in deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda.

37. **Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN had promoted the advancement of women ever since its first Women Leaders' Conference in 1975. Its Committee on Women remained the primary mechanism for coordinating and monitoring implementation of its priorities on women's issues and concerns. He highlighted the Association's recent efforts to promote and protect the rights of women and children, in compliance with the member States' commitments under regional and international treaties.

38. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children in ASEAN, adopted at the twenty-third ASEAN Summit in October 2013, had reaffirmed the commitment to collective action to protect and rehabilitate victims and promote legislation to combat

violence against women. The first ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women had been convened in Vientiane in October 2012, with the aim of strengthening cooperation on women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming. It had continued to hold regional workshops, seminars, training sessions and consultative meetings. The 2013 Meeting of ASEAN Women Parliamentarians had focused on maternal and child health. Despite the challenges of development, ASEAN member States remained committed to making significant progress towards improving the situation of women across the region but realized that more work would need to be done towards achieving common goals. He reaffirmed its readiness to cooperate closely with all interested partners and stakeholders.

39. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that discrimination against women and girls was one of the most pervasive violations of human rights and CARICOM member States accorded high priority to combating it and promoting the advancement of women and girls. CARICOM was committed to accelerating progress towards achievement of the MDGs, including those related to gender equality and empowerment of women. Despite substantial legislative and political progress towards gender equality, gender inequalities persisted. The gender inequality index in the 2012 Caribbean Human Development Report showed that women were disadvantaged in three main areas: reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity. The findings in several CARICOM States demonstrated that gender inequality represented a significant socioeconomic loss for the countries concerned. In response, CARICOM underlined the need to address the full spectrum of health needs of women and girls, to enable them effectively to participate in decision-making and to foster their access to economic and investment opportunities.

40. In fulfilling its commitment to end violence against women, the international community was forced to contend with a global pandemic, with up to seven women in ten facing physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner during their lifetime. It was estimated that about 4.5 million people, mostly women and girls, were forced into labour as victims of sexual exploitation. Domestic violence and trafficking in persons were pressing concerns. There was a need to develop innovative and effective multisectoral

approaches to address threats to the well-being and safety of women and girls worldwide.

41. It was necessary to tackle the root causes of violence and discrimination with an emphasis on prevention, by confronting negative gender stereotyping. The cultural stereotype of an aggressive male was often exhibited early in Caribbean youth, and according to a study of more than 1,000 high school students in six Caribbean nations both boys and girls believed that aggression was a normal aspect of masculinity. A more balanced model of masculinity could help to combat the violence to which Caribbean women were subjected. However, efforts to ensure the inclusion of women and girls must not be at the exclusion of men and boys.

42. CARICOM recognized the important role played by UN-Women in addressing issues of concern to women and girls and coordinating a system-wide response. Capacity-building was vital for enabling States to implement their treaty obligations. CARICOM delegations would continue to engage actively in the intergovernmental process of the General Assembly on strengthening and enhancing the effectiveness of the human rights treaty body system. In particular, CARICOM supported the proposal for convening a session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in New York in order to further dialogue with all Member States. The importance of education could not be overstated and CARICOM welcomed the timely focus on innovating for girls' education in the observance of the second International Day of the Girl Child. At the General Assembly, CARICOM looked forward to the high-level event on the contributions of women, the young and civil society to the post-2015 development agenda. In order to build on the gains made towards women's empowerment, the advancement of women and girls must be a priority in that agenda.

43. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that women all over the world fought hard every day for equality, recognition and safety but those fights were often invisible to the outside world. In March 2013, during the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women,

women from around the world had gathered in New York to advocate for equality. In line with its commitments to the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the European Union condemned any form of violence against women, which could never be justified in the name of custom, tradition, culture, privacy, religion or so-called honour. States had an obligation to prevent and eliminate violence, and to ensure the effective prosecution of perpetrators.

44. The European Union welcomed the key role that UN-Women played in empowering women and eliminating violence against them through its programmes, technical assistance, advocacy and normative work, along with through its leadership and coordination of efforts across the United Nations system. It had already intensified its cooperation with UN-Women in several fields, in line with the European Union guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them and the European Union Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development, as part of the strategy to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs. He urged all countries that not yet done so to sign, ratify and fully implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol.

45. The European Union aimed to ensure that women's rights were safeguarded in periods of transition, in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Myanmar, Tunisia and Yemen and in the Great Lakes region of Africa. There was no doubt that humanitarian crises further increased the vulnerability of refugee and internally displaced women and girls. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid therefore highlighted the importance of integrating gender considerations, incorporating protection strategies and promoting the participation of women. The European Union was committed to strengthening gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance and had finalized a gender policy for humanitarian aid. The Arms Trade Treaty was the first legally binding international instrument on the issue to include a binding criterion on gender-based violence. Women's economic empowerment and full participation in economic life were crucial for development and improving the quality of life. The European Union supported the work of the Special

Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and was establishing a policy on transitional justice, in line with its commitments to peace, security, the rule of law, ending impunity and respect for fundamental human rights. It welcomed the recent endorsement by more than 100 States of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Moreover, the European Union was committed to the fight against female genital mutilation.

46. With regard to the MDGs, he noted that while progress had been significant in primary education, results in economic and political empowerment were less encouraging. Persistent barriers to women's equal participation needed to be removed, with special attention paid to women and girls belonging to vulnerable groups and facing multiple forms of discrimination. The overarching post-2015 development framework should ensure a rights-based approach.

47. **Mr. León González** (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that 2013 had been a year for assessing progress made on gender equality and women's empowerment. Consensus existed at the multilateral level on the need to accord priority to that issue as a prerequisite for advancing the development agenda. CELAC member States were committed to fully mainstreaming a gender perspective into the design, implementation and evaluation of policies. Commitment and action to promote women's participation in decision-making at the highest levels should remain a national and international priority.

48. CELAC had supported the establishment and mandate of UN-Women and welcomed the progress towards establishing a regional architecture. New global challenges required coordinated and coherent work at all levels. The situation of migrant, rural and indigenous women, women with disabilities, older women and women of African descent was a cause for particular concern. CELAC advocated more international dialogue, consensus and cooperation to meet the needs of women and girls, to meet the challenges created by the economic and financial crisis, climate change, international trade barriers and distortions and the food and energy crises. Specific action was needed at all levels to eradicate violence against women in all its forms and manifestations. That violence was frequently aggravated by poverty, hunger,

illiteracy and unemployment. He called for comprehensive action on all those fronts in order to promote real advancement and empowerment of women. By 2050, more than 20 per cent of the world's population would be aged 60 years or older, with a greater and faster increase in the developing world. CELAC encouraged all States to implement measures to promote and protect the human rights of older women and respond to their specific needs, including access to health-care services.

49. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that its Protocol on Gender and Development encompassed commitments made in all regional, continental and global gender-equality instruments, with 28 measurable targets to be reached by 2015. It ensured accountability and provided a forum for sharing best practices, peer support and review. Major constraints continued to hinder full gender equality and the implementation gap caused concern. Contradictions between customary laws, national laws and international commitments persisted, while women's representation in decision-making positions remained low. In seeking to meet its socio-economic aspirations, SADC recognized women's important contribution to human resource development in political, economic and social development, and in facilitating integration and competitiveness.

50. On gender-based violence, he said that the SADC Protocol called on member States to enact and enforce legislation prohibiting such abuse in all its forms. All member States had already ratified the addendum to the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children, 12 had domestic violence laws in place and 11 had integrated national action plans addressing gender-based violence. Moreover, SADC member States were carrying out an extensive media campaign to address the underlying causes. The reduction of such violence and the realization of women's rights everywhere required greater cooperation among States, development partners, donors, academia, researchers, community leaders and civil society together with women and girls themselves. Investment in gender equality and women's empowerment must be increased. He called for adequate funding for policies, plans and strategies in order to combat violence against women.

51. **Ms. Leitch** (Canada) said that the promotion of women's rights was central to her Government's policy since it contributed to a more stable, democratic and prosperous world. One of the first States to have demonstrated its commitment to UN-Women, Canada was one of its biggest donors. Her country had led the annual Human Rights Council resolution on violence against women, which in 2012 had led to the recognition of marital rape as a crime of sexual violence. Committed to preventing sexual and gender-based violence and protecting women's and girls' rights in fragile and conflict-affected communities, Canada had provided more than \$13 million to end sexual violence and encourage the full participation of women in emerging democracies. It also invested in domestic projects aimed at preventing and ending violence against women and girls, while placing a high priority on the full participation of women and girls in every aspect of society. Her Government recognized that investment in women and girls' health was central to eliminating poverty and creating healthy, sustainable communities. Tragically, many women and children in developing countries were victims of disease, poor nutrition and inadequate health care. Improving child and maternal health was a flagship priority for Canada, as demonstrated by its commitment to child and maternal health at the summit of major industrialized countries held in Canada in 2010.

52. Canada was committed to working with partners around the world to end the practice of child, early and forced marriage and had co-hosted a General Assembly side event to raise awareness on the issue. Canada had also played an active role in a procedural resolution on the matter adopted at the twenty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council. It was working with its partners to pursue the first stand-alone resolution on the subject during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, paving the way for a substantive resolution at the 2014 General Assembly. Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions were complementary and would inform the substantive work on the issue by the international community, including in the post-2015 development framework.

53. **Ms. Maina** (Nigeria) said that, despite progress, in particular in raising public awareness, much more needed to be done to address the issues raised in the Secretary-General's 2006 study on violence against women, above all domestic violence and systematic violations of women's rights in conflict situations.

Nigeria was committed to accelerating national and regional implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, above all the resolution on sexual violence against women in conflict situations. To raise awareness, her Government had established an interministerial committee on women and peace, made up of military, paramilitary and police officials along with Government and civil society representatives. It had launched a national action plan for women's involvement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution while implementing a policy to recruit women into defence and police establishments.

54. The promotion of women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming lay at the core of Government policy. To alleviate the burden of poverty on women and girls, her Government had launched a reinvestment and empowerment programme for reducing unemployment and social exclusion. It had introduced a gender-responsive budgeting strategy in January 2013 to deliver key results for women and girls. In particular, the Ministry of Health was focusing on women's health issues and was finalizing a policy on the elimination of female genital mutilation. An innovative mechanism successfully ensured partnership between federal, state and local governments to enhance reproductive health. Nigeria was committed to translating economic growth into equitable social development that guaranteed a dignified existence for all, in particular women and children.

55. **Ms. Cho Yoon Sun** (Republic of Korea) said that sexual violence against women in armed conflict situations persisted despite international efforts and the international community must work together to eradicate it. The persistence of such crimes was due to the failure sincerely to reflect on or apologize for past crimes, an example being that of the so-called comfort women. They had been abducted and taken to military units to service 10 to 30 soldiers every day, facing severe beatings if they refused, resisted or tried to escape. Those teenagers had once numbered more than 100,000 but only 56 were still alive, living with the physical and emotional scars of their experiences and stigmatized by their past. The Republic of Korea supported the survivors by meeting their living and medical expenses, but the only way to ensure a real resolution was for the responsible Government to apologize genuinely, take the appropriate measures and set the distorted history of comfort women straight. That Government should respond to repeated calls by

the international community by recognizing its legal liability and taking appropriate measures acceptable to the victims. The question of comfort women was not just a diplomatic issue concerning the particular countries involved. Without a fair solution to the issue, collective voices raised against other sexual violations in armed conflicts would lose force and a solution to the problem might never be found.

56. **Mr. Ahamed** (India) said that his Government was adopting an appropriate legislative and policy framework for the advancement of women and for raising social awareness of gender inequality and women's empowerment, in order to fight deep-rooted social prejudices and stereotypes. In 1992, the Government had set a quota of 33 per cent women's representation in rural and local government and the quota had been raised to 50 per cent in local authorities in 2009. Nearly 1.5 million elected women representatives were helping to bridge the gender divide in decision-making.

57. The 2011 census indicated an increase in the literacy rate among women, thanks to Government efforts to adopt innovative education schemes. With nearly universal enrolment in primary education, India's focus had switched to the expansion of secondary education and its accessibility to girls. Maternal and child health programmes had increased life expectancy and immunization rates, while leading to a substantial decline in infant and maternal mortality rates.

58. Government measures for rural women and women entrepreneurs included offering easier access to credit, low-interest loans and support for rights to land ownership. At least 50 per cent of the work was reserved for women in a national rural employment guarantee scheme, which responded to the needs of 53 million poor rural households by assuring them 100 days' employment a year and mandating equal pay for men and women. His Government had proposed to set up India's first all-women bank to help women entrepreneurs, allocating \$200 million as initial capital.

59. The exploitation of women and gender-based violence must be unequivocally condemned and addressed, while the stigmatization of victims, trivialization of the crime and impunity must be stopped. His Government had set up fast-track courts, broadened the definition of sexual assault and harassment, increased the accountability of officials,

and established special crisis centres for women victims of violence in 100 critical districts.

60. **Mr. Jusu** (Sierra Leone) said that women continued to be one of the most marginalized groups in society, which barred them from full participation in development and the decision-making process. In response, his Government had taken various legislative measures, taking international instruments as their basis, and in July 2013 the President had launched the Agenda for Prosperity, the national roadmap to the post-2015 development agenda, one of whose pillars addressed gender equality and women's empowerment. The aim of the national gender strategy plan, one of Sierra Leone's flagship development programmes, was to mainstream gender in all Government policies while achieving gender equality in legislation, participation, representation, empowerment and distribution of resources. It also served as a tool for the efficient coordination of gender-response programmes, and for tracking joint Government-donor policies and budgets on gender-related programmes. Those sections of the Constitution identified as disadvantaging to women would be considered during the ongoing national constitutional review process. Other initiatives taken to empower women concerned children's rights, girls' education and literacy, along with microfinance and loans schemes.

61. At the international level, the Beijing Platform for Action remained a comprehensive global policy framework for the realization of gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women and girls. However, disparities remained between regions and within countries, which would negatively affect progress in achieving the MDGs. Sierra Leone therefore called for stronger cooperation to enhance their timely implementation. Global partnerships were urgently needed to mobilize financial resources to ensure steady progress. The international community should focus attention on the empowerment of women to create a caring, just and peaceful world.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.