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Chair: Mr. Hilale (Morocco)
later: Mr. Dempsey (Vice-Chair) (Canada)

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

Agenda item 28: Social development (continued)

- (a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (continued) (A/70/173 and A/70/178)**
- (b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (continued) (A/70/61-E/2015/3, A/70/118, A/70/156, A/70/161 and A/70/179)**
- (c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (continued) (A/70/185)**

1. **Ms. Belskaya** (Belarus) said that the Government of Belarus, reiterating its firm commitment to implementing the new Agenda for Sustainable Development, had developed a national strategy for sustainable development for the period until 2030, which was based on the targets and priorities set out in United Nations policy documents and national priorities for medium- and long term development.

2. The youth policy of Belarus aimed to encourage the participation of youth in the country's economic, social and political life, by engaging youth in government, science and economics, cultivating youth entrepreneurship, ensuring employment and competitiveness in the labour market, and providing State support to talented and gifted young people.

3. In light of the growing ageing population and the consequent demographic burden, the Government of Belarus, while maintaining a stable, financially sustainable pension scheme and ensuring quality of life in old age, was planning measures to increase the participation of the elderly in social life and increase the demand for older persons in the labour market, which required the creation and development of a lifelong retraining and professional education scheme.

4. The Government was continuing its policy of strengthening the institution of the family, promoting family values and enhancing the role of parents in raising children. Planned measures to support families included the creation of conditions conducive to work-family balance, the introduction of a financial benefit for families upon the birth of the third child and

subsequent children, and the provision of discounted family passes for cultural and sporting events.

5. People with disabilities had benefited for over a decade from access to education, employment opportunities and a barrier-free environment. At the most recent presidential elections, blind voters had been able to participate for the first time, with the help of special stencils for ballot papers and information on candidates provided in Braille. On 28 September 2015, the President of Belarus had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and Belarus must develop a government instrument giving persons with disabilities the opportunity to defend their legal rights and interests on the basis of non-discrimination.

6. **Ms. Gustafsson** (Sweden), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people must be given opportunities for involvement in building a sustainable future. Despite comprising most of the world population, they were still generally denied power and participation. Education, as a human right and the cornerstone of individual development, must be made available to all, in particular to those in vulnerable situations, such as refugee children. Quality education was key for ensuring that young people attained the independence, opportunities and tools they deserved, including awareness of their rights.

7. A powerful and organized civil society that included young people strengthened not only the society in which it operated, but the individual members of that society as well. Young people should have the right to organize themselves within transparent and accessible democracies. Access to reliable information about current affairs and freedom of expression were crucial in that regard. Ultimately, true progress in the implementation of the new development agenda recently adopted by the Member States would be achieved only with the full and equal participation of youth.

8. **Ms. Carias** (Honduras) said that, as a developing State, Honduras had consistently strived to meet internationally agreed development targets since the signing of the Millennium Declaration in 2000. A guaranteed minimum income, food security, decent housing, access to primary health care and universal pre-school and primary school education were the pillars of the new "Better Life" strategy launched by the President of Honduras to promote social inclusion and reduce poverty by 20 percentage points.

Approximately 185 million dollars had been invested in the social protection of 400,000 extremely poor households.

9. With “Better Life” and the introduction of new social protection legislation and other measures, Honduras was bringing its national agenda into line with the new Sustainable Development Goals. The distribution of ecological stoves to 50,000 families, for example, was having a positive impact, not only on family health and household incomes, but also on the environment. Meanwhile the lives of many in the country were being improved through conditional cash grants, school vegetable gardens and special allowances for the elderly. Honduras supported the discussions taking place within the United Nations system that could lead to an international convention on the protection and promotion of the rights of older persons. The Government had also implemented targeted strategies to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in society and the labour market and improve their access to comprehensive health services and education.

10. Honduras faced, however, a number of challenges in the fight against poverty. It was particularly vulnerable to climate change and, consequently, was now experiencing the second year of the worst drought since the 1950s. Violence associated with drug-trafficking and organized crime affected young people and children in particular, and had boosted migration. Honduras was working with El Salvador and Guatemala within the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle to address the problem, and the corresponding five-year plan sought to strengthen institutions, boost the production sector, improve security and coordinate action to keep people in their respective countries.

11. **Mr. Erdene** (Mongolia) said that the Government of Mongolia had always supported United Nations initiatives and policies on population and development and been committed to implementing them at the national level. In aligning itself with the objectives of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the Government had introduced major policy reforms, including pension reforms, which took into account the human rights of older persons, as well as social and economic considerations. The elderly currently accounted for over 10 per cent of the population. Mongolia fully supported the initiative to draw up an international convention on the rights of older persons.

12. The Government had also been pursuing policies to increase youth participation in policy-making and supporting youth-led initiatives at all levels. A national youth committee, comprising representatives of ministries, non-governmental youth organizations and international organizations had been crucial in developing comprehensive youth-oriented plans, policies and programmes. A new youth development policy and a national “Young Mongolian” programme were being drafted on the basis of recommendations emanating from a series of national consultations organized among young people. Youth development centres were being set up in provinces with the support of the United Nations Population Fund to promote the participation of rural youth in local government.

13. The Government had designated 2014 as the “Year of Family”. Mongolian families faced acute challenges: one third lived in poverty, and changes were occurring in their traditional structures. The number of divorces and female-headed households was rising, and many young people of reproductive age went abroad in search of a better life. Early marriage was far less common, but domestic violence remained a worrying social issue. The Government was therefore introducing legal measures to support families. A bill to protect the rights of persons with disabilities was also currently before parliament, in keeping with the country’s obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

14. Cooperatives had considerable potential to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and, as a main sponsor of the bi-annual General Assembly resolution on cooperatives in social development, Mongolia welcomed the recommendations made by the Secretary-General regarding cooperatives.

15. **Mr. Kydyrov** (Kyrgyzstan) said that, although good progress was being made towards eliminating poverty in Kyrgyzstan, there was still a social rift between the populations of mountain and rural regions and city inhabitants, and the situation was worsening with climate change and land degradation. Owing to the lack of alternative employment opportunities, a large number of people from mountain and rural regions were being forced to leave the country in search of decent work. Kyrgyzstan was thus taking results-oriented, organizational, institutional and legal measures to provide decent work and increase income.

16. With a view to ensuring young people receive education and professional development, facilitating their employment and engaging them in the functioning of society and the State, Kyrgyzstan had adopted legislation on State youth policy, developed a State youth policy strategy and reflected those aims in its national sustainable development strategy which covered the period until 2017.

17. State policy on the elderly addressed social stability and the quality of health-care services, in an integrated, consistent and targeted approach, while eliminating dependency.

18. Strengthening human potential through investment in education was of the utmost importance for reducing the level of social and economic vulnerability. In Kyrgyzstan, the literacy rate of people aged between 15 and 24 years was higher than 99 per cent. The President had decided to invest \$100 million in building schools in rural regions, which was the country's first step towards fulfilling Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Education for All initiative.

19. **Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota** (Brazil) said that one of the main elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was that no one would be left behind. The rapid ageing of the world population meant that urgent action was needed to realize the human rights of older persons. The consolidation of those rights in a specific and legally binding document would address the current dispersion of those rights among different regulatory instruments, strengthen their monitoring and realization, and help define the responsibilities of States. The adoption, on 15 June 2015, of the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons marked a first, significant step in that direction, and would help create momentum for the negotiation of a universally applicable convention within the United Nations.

20. One of the great achievements of the 2030 Agenda was the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The full realization of their rights was one of Brazil's priorities, as reflected in the constitutional status accorded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Brazil's participation in the Bureau of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention for the period 2015-2016.

21. Young persons accounted for over 25 per cent of Brazil's population, and social development would not

be achieved without fulfilling their basic needs regarding health, education, decent work and the right to freedom from fear and from discrimination. Brazil recognized the work of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Youth and welcomed other United Nations initiatives aimed at fostering youth participation. However, the legal framework to promote and protect the human rights of youth was insufficient. Brazil supported the negotiation of a treaty on the matter, so as to turn political commitments into legally binding obligations.

22. Brazil and Japan would submit a draft resolution on volunteering during the session. Volunteerism was an important component of any strategy related to poverty eradication, sustainable development, youth empowerment, climate change, disaster prevention and management, social integration, humanitarian action and peacebuilding. As such, it could be a valuable tool for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

23. During the preceding decade, Brazil had experienced an unprecedented reduction in inequality thanks to the package of social protection measures introduced and, in great part, the inclusive definition of families used in their implementation. Had the Government not targeted all forms of families (single-parent, same-sex, no-children and no-parent families), 36 million Brazilians would not have been lifted out of poverty. On the contrary, vulnerabilities and the multiple forms of discrimination they already suffered would have worsened.

24. **Ms. Smaila** (Nigeria) said that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would largely depend on a global partnership and the active engagement of governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations system. Social development rightly received considerable attention in the 2030 Agenda, which called for equitable and universal access to social protection. Empowerment and inclusion remained crucial for addressing poverty and unemployment. Accordingly, social justice, the protection of rights and liberties and the guarantee of equitable development for all citizens were enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution as fundamental objectives and principles of State policy. To promote social justice, the Government was pursuing social security for all citizens through targeted social programmes and strengthening institutional capacity so that all social groups could participate effectively in society.

25. Nigeria remained committed to the full and effective implementation of all instruments, including human rights instruments to which it was party, in recognition of the linkage between human rights and social development. Nigeria had a teeming youth population that was enterprising, innovative and vocal, and women and youth issues were central to the national development agenda, which focused squarely on tackling unemployment and insecurity. The interests of persons with disabilities had been incorporated into all its national development plans and strategies as part of the work to protect their rights and dignity, and older persons were viewed as a social group requiring specialized attention and health-care services. Nigeria recognized the family as the basic unit of society and deserving of support and protection. It was important to understand the challenges that the family faced and the role it could play in improving social conditions.

26. *Mr. Dempsey (Canada), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

27. **Ms. Sikharulidze** (Georgia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Georgia was making progress in building an inclusive society and creating an enabling environment, including through implementation of the national youth policy and the respective action plan developed in 2014. Young people comprised a quarter of the population and faced multiple challenges. Disregard for the fundamental principles of international law, human rights and basic freedoms had significantly contributed to the dangerous erosion of trust between nations and peoples, which in turn fuelled violent extremism and the radicalization of youth in certain parts of the world. Recent events in the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe had shown that security could not be taken for granted, and all like-minded countries must stand united to protect and promote peace and stability. In that regard Georgia remained a strong partner in the fight against terrorism.

28. The challenges faced by Georgian youth were aggravated by the military occupation of about 20 per cent of the country. Approximately 400,000 persons had been banished from their homes in South Ossetia. Among them were young persons who had endured multiple waves of displacement and ethnic cleansing, as well as large-scale war. The only durable solution was a safe, dignified and voluntary return for the displaced to their places of origin. Of particular concern was the denial of the right of the young people in the occupied territories to be educated in their own

native language, in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite the difficulties, many youths in villages affected by the conflict refused to move to the cities, where conditions were better; instead they were standing up for dignity, liberty and justice, at the expense of their own security. Statements of regret and condemnation in response to the situation were not sufficient. The young people of Georgia needed international support; the military occupation by a foreign power was not just an act of violence against a specific country, but a deliberate attempt to undermine the universal principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

29. All young people should commit to cooperation in the pursuit of sustainable peace and development. Young people were not only the future, but also the present, and they stood ready to participate in the implementation of the new Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in relation to the promotion and empowerment of youth around the globe.

30. **Ms. Natividad** (Philippines) said that the family was enshrined in the Philippine Constitution as the foundation of the nation. Family-oriented policies and programmes contributed to the achievement of a broad range of development goals, and to that end, the Government had implemented a conditional cash transfer programme to assist extremely poor families and break the intergenerational poverty cycle with investments in the health and education of poor children. In March-April 2015, over 94 per cent compliance had been achieved in a number of programmes: deworming for children, day-care and school attendance, health visits by pregnant women and children and attendance at family development sessions, and the programme currently benefited over 4 million households. The World Bank had recently hailed it as one of the largest and best-targeted social safety net programmes in the world.

31. Addressing the work-family balance was important for promoting gender equality and the better sharing of household responsibilities between men and women. The Government of the Philippines had introduced a special programme to improve the parenting capabilities of fathers and promote a positive family life. The Philippines proposed looking into the importance of family relationships in times of disaster and the strengthening of family unity and the family's ability to recover after a disaster as a theme for future

reports on family issues and the contribution families make to development.

32. Attention to older persons was as important as attention to the rest of the family. Given the projected ageing of the world population, serious efforts must be made to promote the health, well-being, rights and empowerment of senior citizens. The Philippines remained committed to providing social protection for older persons as provided in its Constitution.

33. **Ms. Holzer** (Israel), speaking as a youth delegate, said that in order to enact social change, States needed to go beyond legislation and focus on the youth, who represented the future of any nation. Cultivating social consciousness and active commitment from a young age was the most effective way to achieve a society based on equality and mutual understanding. To that end, Israel raised youth awareness about social development needs and empowered young people to challenge conventional paradigms and bring about change.

34. One of the key social issues impacting youth was the rigid definition of family, which could lead to struggles with identity formation and social acceptance. Though international civil society increasingly recognized the family unit as a fluid structure, the struggle for acceptance was ongoing. Israel strove to combat intolerance by instilling acceptance at an early age for the many types of family units that existed within its borders.

35. Intolerance of people with disabilities represented another challenge. Israel remained committed to upholding the rights of people with disabilities by fostering a more inclusive society, in addition to providing legal protection. Integration of people with disabilities at a young age was crucial. Many Israeli organizations worked to achieve that goal, such as Krembo Wings and Israeli Scouts, which had programmes that enabled youth with disabilities to participate in activities with other young people.

36. The social exclusion of older persons was also a global concern. Israel viewed its ageing population as an asset, both for their contributions to the past and their importance to the future. Therefore, the Israeli government and civil society strove to foster engagement between the youth and the elderly through various programmes and organizations that offered young adults the opportunity to learn from the knowledge and experience of older generations. That

type of interaction engendered greater social awareness and more comprehensive social development. Israel was making far-reaching and varied efforts to educate and inspire the country's youth to a life of social action in order to create a better future.

37. **Ms. Guzmán Madera** (Dominican Republic) said that it was the ideal time to connect the pillars of the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Her Government was committed to strengthening public policies as a means towards eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, with initiatives that included investing in education, health and youth employment.

38. Her Government worked tirelessly for the full inclusion of people with disabilities. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities targeted the poorest sectors with a community-based development programme and the Office of the First Lady had encouraged the creation of a centre to provide care and education to children with disabilities. Those two bodies, along with UNICEF, were working to establish a national system to deliver effective care to people with disabilities. The first conference on accessible tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean was held to promote equal access to tourism for persons with disabilities.

39. The national council for the rights of older persons had created programmes to develop a new approach to the care of older persons, especially those who were homeless, and had created a network of caretakers for the elderly by coordinating the various geriatric centres.

40. Since young people represented a large percentage of the global population and were eager for opportunities to develop, her Government trusted that the United Nations would continue to maintain a dialogue between youth, governments, civil society and other stakeholders in order to allow youth to influence policies at the local, regional and global level, especially in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Dominican Republic called on the international community to develop inclusive policies and continue to encourage the participation of all groups in society.

41. **Mr. Dimitrov** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that all States should ensure meaningful participation of youth at all levels and consider them

equal partners in facing global issues. Bulgarian young people considered quality education and professional development key prerequisites for youth development. Education must meet the constantly changing needs of the market, and youth should be included in drafting educational strategies, policies and curricula, thereby allowing young people to obtain adequate skills and capacities for their future professional development.

42. A quality education was even more important for young persons with disabilities in order to ensure their social inclusion, economic participation and active involvement in the processes affecting their lives. Organizations of persons with disabilities, civil society, youth representatives, the private sector and other stakeholders should be involved in developing measures that promote greater involvement of persons with disabilities in social and public life. One possible solution was the introduction of non-formal educational practices. Educational institutions should also be more accessible to young persons with disabilities and should recruit qualified young teachers who could meet the needs of students with disabilities.

43. **Ms. Yovkova** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that youth unemployment was one of the most pressing youth issues. Many Member States considered non-formal education and volunteering efficient tools that encouraged young people to engage in lifelong learning and acquire the skills needed to increase employability and competitiveness in the job market. Bulgarian youth had consistently called for the private and public sectors to recognize the knowledge obtained through non-formal education.

44. Sustainable development was inextricably related to youth development. The Bulgarian youth delegates had raised awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals in their country, where young people were prepared to contribute to implementing the 2030 Agenda. Individuals and their rights must remain at the core of the 2030 Agenda and the actions undertaken towards its implementation.

45. The Bulgarian youth delegates had established an initiative to promote better communication between young Bulgarians and refugees, which could encourage more young people to volunteer in projects related to refugees' integration in society, especially those from Syria and Iraq.

46. **Ms. Al-Temimi** (Qatar) said that job creation and empowerment were crucial if countries wished to

achieve sustainable social and economic development. Qatar was pursuing people-centred development, as described in the Qatar National Vision 2030, which called for social development based on the establishment of strong and active civil society organizations and effective public institutions.

47. In view of the fundamental role of the family in society and development, Qatar attached great importance to protecting the family and developing the capacities of family members. It was also seeking to enhance the skills of young people and encourage their participation in society. To that end, Qatar was making significant investments in education so that young people could learn the skills they needed to play an active role in development initiatives, and had hosted a number of youth conferences at which the participants had discussed ways to empower young people as decision makers and ensure that their voices were heard. Furthermore, the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations, in cooperation with the Permanent Missions of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, Columbia University, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, had convened a seminar on addressing the root causes of extremism and terrorism and on ways to rehabilitate young people who had been affected by violent extremism and reintegrate them into society. Civil society organizations in Qatar had also organized workshops to enhance the skills of young people from the region so that they could realize their ambitions and would be able to reject extremist narratives.

48. Qatar had adopted legislation to strengthen the rights of older persons and persons with disabilities and was compiling extensive databases with a view to designing and implementing effective policies to address their needs. Furthermore, the Government of Qatar and a number of national civil society organizations provided older persons and persons with disabilities with social, housing and health care services, promoted their active participation in society, and conducted campaigns to raise awareness of their rights.

49. **Ms. Saddy** (Niger) said that her country's rapid population growth made it difficult to satisfy the needs for basic social services, despite the will of her Government, the availability of natural resources and an economic growth rate that was one of the highest in the world. Nigeria had implemented a social development policy to target poverty and to strengthen social integration, social justice and equality. The

percentage of people living below the poverty line had decreased to 43 per cent. Measures for disaster prevention and response included community support programmes, free food supplies and financial assistance for those affected. The enrolment rate for primary education had increased to 83.7 per cent and school had become compulsory up to the age of 16. There was also an education system that assisted children and parents with disabilities. In terms of technical and professional development, job-specific training facilities and universities had been built.

50. Preventive health measures were in place and access to primary health care services had been expanded. Specialized medical equipment was available for older persons and people with disabilities. Health care coverage and the number of assisted births had increased and the infant mortality rate had decreased. More than 50 per cent of rural areas had access to potable water.

51. Niger had developed a national employment policy, professional and technical training policies for various sectors and a strategy to promote youth entrepreneurship. Women were granted direct credit revenue-generating activities.

52. Legislation and regulations had been adopted to assist older persons and people with disabilities, especially families in poverty, women with obstetric fistula and individuals suffering from chronic illnesses. Five per cent of jobs in public and private establishments had been reserved for persons with disabilities. Niger hoped to overcome its major challenges, which included maintaining strong and sustainable economic growth and providing public aid for development, in order to become a nation that could provide essential services and allow all social and professional groups to thrive.

53. **Mr. Andanje** (Kenya) said that despite remarkable gains in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, developing countries continued to face challenges in reducing inequalities. Access to affordable quality health care and improved standards of living for the poor and marginalized remained a challenge. There had been steady progress toward the eradication of poverty, but more needed to be done.

54. His Government had achieved universal primary education, enhanced the participation of women, implemented programmes to benefit disadvantaged

groups, and made significant advances in reducing child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Developing countries like Kenya would require multi-stakeholder partnerships, voluntary contributions and domestic mobilization of resources to prioritize the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

55. Resources had been allocated for the implementation of social programmes that addressed the most vulnerable sectors of the population. Credit access initiatives and enterprise funds targeted youth, women and persons with disabilities, offering credit facilities for entrepreneurship at zero interest in order to drive enterprise, encourage job creation and spur growth.

56. Constitutional safeguards for the rights of persons with disabilities were intended to minimize barriers to equal opportunities in all aspects of sociocultural and political life. His Government had established a strategy to provide persons with disabilities with the funds and equipment necessary to establish businesses. A cash transfer programme provided the appropriate social security to persons with disabilities who were unable to support themselves and their dependents, and free health care was also provided. His government upheld the rights, welfare and dignity of older persons and had established a cash transfer programme for poor and vulnerable older persons.

57. Kenya's National Youth Council served as a voice for the youth and provided a resourced and functional youth engagement framework. The National Youth Service guaranteed relevant vocational training and skills for the job market. The constitution provided for youth involvement and participation in socioeconomic and political development, including elective appointments. Full employment and decent work for all continued to be Kenya's biggest challenge.

58. **Mr. Timis** (Romania), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the youth of Romania had identified education, employment and civic engagement as areas requiring attention. With regard to education, there were significant discrepancies between rural and urban areas in access to education, illiteracy and school dropout. The non-governmental organization Teach for Romania was addressing the situation by providing young Romanians with the training and support necessary to become leaders in education. That trend

could be supported by the provision of adequate funding for infrastructure and academic staff.

59. Youth struggled with the transition to the job market because of a lack of career counselling and the gap between the skills acquired through education and those required in the job market. Public policies should foster entrepreneurship and facilitate the entry of young people into the job market.

60. **Ms. Agachi** (Romania), speaking as a youth delegate, said that civic engagement was crucial to the well-being of any society and youth participation should be encouraged. The youth needed to be better informed about their rights and responsibilities and introduced to political education from an early age in order to be connected with the local and global agenda. They also needed to be more involved in decision-making processes at the societal level, which could include establishing a youth strategy, implementing a youth advisory board and organizing consultations with young people.

61. Youth engagement in volunteer activities should be officially recognized and certified. Romania had established an online platform to match young people with organizations offering volunteer opportunities and official certificates validating the competencies acquired. Through volunteerism, young people grew into proactive and charitable citizens with the potential to become role models in their communities and impact society.

62. **Ms. Yaguchi** (Japan) said that women's political empowerment and democratic governance were essential prerequisites for a peaceful and equitable civil society. Japan welcomed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, strongly supported its human-centred approach and looked forward to actively promoting the implementation of that Agenda with a view to empowering and promoting the rights of the vulnerable. In addition to the engagement of governments, civil society organizations and the private sector, implementation of the Agenda would require volunteers to play an active role and, to that end, Japan and Brazil intended to submit to the Committee a draft resolution on the promotion of volunteerism.

63. Japan had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2014 and was strengthening its national legislation to combat discrimination. Japan had taken an active role in

international discussions and activities in that area. In the Sendai Declaration, adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the international community had emphasized that it was crucial to address the needs of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction initiatives. Japan had, moreover, nominated Professor Ishikawa, an expert on disability rights, as a candidate for election in 2016 to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

64. States must make every effort to empower and promote the health, safety, and security of older persons. Indeed, persons over the age of 65 years comprised 26 per cent of the population of Japan, which was one of the most aged countries in the world. The Government of Japan was taking action to promote the employment of older persons, improve their working conditions and combat discriminatory dismissal.

65. Many issues related to social development were particularly relevant in the international community's efforts to address recent challenges in Africa. For example, the spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa had highlighted the vulnerabilities of affected countries' health care systems, and poverty and unemployment had fostered violent radicalism in certain African States. At the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, to be held in 2016, Japan would seek to spur "quality growth" with a view to promoting human security in Africa, not only through further economic development but also by strengthening countries' health care systems, empowering women and promoting comprehensive education. At the global level, the Government of Japan would continue its efforts to empower all individuals, including members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, to ensure that, truly, no one was left behind.

66. **Mr. Bishnoi** (India) said that progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals had been uneven. Poverty eradication and social inclusion must remain top priorities if the international community was to foster sustainable development. India therefore commended the fact that poverty eradication lay at the heart of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development Goals were far-reaching and people-centred, and they recognized the relationship between the social and other dimensions of development.

Indeed, India's development agenda was mirrored in the Sustainable Development Goals and, in its poverty eradication, education, health and social protection policies, India focused, in particular, on vulnerable members of society, including women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons. In the previous few years, India had provided banking services to some 170 million of its poorest citizens as part of its economic empowerment and development efforts, and innovative insurance schemes had benefitted more than one hundred million poor families. The Government was also seeking to provide clean water and improve sanitation for all Indian citizens, provide quality education and training to its young people and ensure that persons with disabilities and older persons could lead secure, dignified and productive lives.

67. There was no "one size fits all" model for social development, and he commended the fact that the Agenda for Sustainable Development upheld the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. In that regard, official development assistance would remain critical if developing countries were to implement their national development programmes successfully.

68. **Mr. Tituaña Matango** (Ecuador) said that, around the world, economic interests continued to take priority over social concerns, owing to the practices of traditional financial institutions as well as neoliberal doctrines that considered social investment to be a waste. Ecuador disagreed with that analysis, believing that the fight against poverty should involve overcoming inequalities. Goals should not be based on market consumption but should take into consideration the full enjoyment of life with dignity. That would lead to better social welfare and the end of economic and social inequality. Ecuador had advocated the adoption of a development agenda that focused on people rather than on financial capital and commended the emphasis placed in the Agenda for Sustainable Development on the promotion of equity.

69. The Ecuadorian Government had turned to collective action and the public sector to guarantee justice, economic, social and cultural rights, employment, recreation and artistic creation. Unprecedented health and education investments had also been made to eliminate the intergenerational poverty trap and to achieve the goal of "living well". Investment in social development was a priority for

Ecuador and had increased exponentially over the previous eight years. Poverty levels in the country had fallen thanks to Government programmes designed to meet the basic needs of the population, namely health care, education and housing. Ecuador also recognized women's contribution to the economy; it had developed inclusive policies on women's empowerment and sought to ensure that all women, including those working in the home without pay, were covered by the social security system.

70. There could be no social development in a society that did not respect the rights of persons with disabilities. Ecuador was therefore working at the regional level to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and the workforce. In 2013, Ecuador had proposed the appointment of a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility and it welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to agree to that proposal. Ecuador was also making early childhood development policies a priority in order to overcome the intergenerational trap of poverty and reduce poverty more quickly.

71. **Mr. Al-Otoom** (Jordan) said that, for States to eradicate poverty, they must enact comprehensive policies to improve the lives of poor and marginalized members of their societies. To that end, Jordan's national anti-poverty strategy aimed to enhance the skills of the poor, provide them with income-generating opportunities and integrate them fully into society. However, despite the considerable successes it had achieved in terms of social development, Jordan was facing significant challenges related to the influx into the country of large numbers of Syrian refugees, who were placing great strains on the country's health, educational, municipal and other services.

72. Jordan had established the first specialist agency on the family in the Middle East, which addressed, inter alia, the needs of female victims of violence. Jordan had also amended its legislation to enhance legal safeguards for women, including with regard to education, health, employment, as well as safeguards for children of Jordanian women who were married to non-Jordanians. To promote the interests of young people, Jordan was strengthening their role in economic, social and political development by investing in education, fostering creativity and analytical thought among young people, promoting a sense of national identity and encouraging young people to take part in decision-making. Jordan had

ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, had formulated a national strategy to promote their rights and defend their interests, and had drawn up policies that aimed to remove all obstacles preventing the full participation of persons with disabilities in society. All social development policy measures in Jordan were being implemented with full respect for the principles of non-exclusion and non-discrimination.

73. **Ms. Sabja** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that her Government was committed to achieving social inclusion and integration and had made significant progress on many social issues. Despite the financial and economic crisis affecting the so-called developed countries, economic growth was at 5 per cent, which had contributed to a significant reduction in extreme poverty. One million Bolivians, which represented 10 per cent of the population, had entered the middle class over the past nine years. The nationalization of the oil and gas industry and telecommunications and the creation of new businesses had resulted in benefits for the people. The Plurinational State of Bolivia had created a programme of monetary incentives to reduce the school dropout rate, which was now at 1.5 per cent. Chronic malnutrition in children under the age of two had fallen to 15.5 per cent, and her Government had reached its target literacy rate for young people aged 15 to 24 years, as a result of the national literacy programme and cooperation with Cuba and Venezuela.

74. Her Government had also reached its goal of providing health care to pregnant women and had seen a decline in maternal and infant mortality, which was associated with the provision of vouchers for pregnant women and children up to the age of two. A focus was also placed on infant nutrition. Decent homes had been built for the most vulnerable populations, mainly indigenous families. Potable water was available in all municipalities and accessible to 75 per cent of the population.

75. The Bolivian Constitution protected the rights of persons with disabilities to education, health care, communication, decent and appropriate work, fair remuneration, and the opportunity to develop their individual potential. Her Government had also determined that funds formerly received by political parties for their campaigns should henceforth be used to improve the life and working conditions of persons with disabilities. The Constitution also protected the

rights of youth and promoted their active participation in productive, political, social, economic and cultural development. The growing population of older persons posed a challenge to social policies. In response, Bolivia had developed a national policy on ageing, designed to protect the fundamental rights of older persons and provide them with a life of dignity.

76. **Mr. González Serafini** (Argentina) said that Argentina was strengthening various aspects of its human development policy; it had adopted a rights-based focus and pursued sustainable and inclusive development strategies that were centred on the individual, the family and the community. Argentina reiterated its commitment to working tirelessly to implement a socially inclusive and effective global development agenda in order to ensure development for all. It was working to protect all types of families and strengthen community organizations while acknowledging the fundamental role played by the State. Efforts were being made to provide universal access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health, increase the participation in society of older persons, youth and children, narrow social inequality gaps, address the needs of persons with disabilities and protect the rights of indigenous persons.

77. Social justice and the promotion of human rights were key objectives of Argentine social action and policy and local authorities and organizations were accorded a key role in determining investment and action priorities. Strengthening social inclusion and eradicating poverty and hunger would remain key objectives for Argentina as it took action to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While Governments would remain key stakeholders in the implementation of that Agenda, it was crucial that civil society organizations and international bodies were also involved fully involved in that process.

78. It was important to respect, safeguard and promote the human rights of older persons worldwide. Without adequate protections, older persons were frequently the victims of abuse. Universal and binding international legislation was needed to protect them and other vulnerable groups, including children and women. Indeed, an international convention that provided safeguards for older persons would facilitate the international community's efforts to move forward on its goal of leaving no one behind.

79. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia) said that, although the Millennium Development Goals target on poverty had been achieved in 2010, millions of people around the world continued to live below the poverty line. Furthermore, the repercussions of global economic and financial crises and climate change continued to impede countries' efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion. Millions remained unemployed and, despite the adoption by States of policies targeting poor and marginalized sectors of society, including older persons, persons with disabilities and indigenous persons, increasing levels of inequality threatened to further destabilize societies.

80. Ethiopia's Accelerated Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme and its Growth and Transformation Plan I had helped reduce poverty rates from 44 per cent in 2000 to 33 per cent in 2011. Furthermore, over the previous ten years, the country had achieved average economic growth rates of more than 10 per cent per year. Investments in pro-poor sectors and agriculture had enabled the country to achieve such remarkable progress. Ethiopia had also instituted a national safety net programme that had reduced food insecurity and pulled some 1.5 million people out of poverty. Meanwhile, investments in education and health had improved Ethiopia's human development indicators. Ethiopia had also witnessed a decline in urban unemployment for both men and women. Ensuring decent work lay at the heart of Ethiopia's poverty reduction endeavours. An inclusive society was a prerequisite for social progress and Ethiopia would continue to address the needs of vulnerable and marginalized segments of society in its development policies and strategies.

81. Ethiopia had adopted a national plan of action on older persons and had taken action to support them in income-generating activities. The Government also worked closely with civil society to provide older persons with adequate shelter, food, clothing, medical care and recreational facilities. Retired public sector employees received a pension and the Ethiopian Government was striving to ensure that pensions were also provided to private sector workers. Ethiopia had, moreover, ratified the Convention on Persons with Disabilities, whose rights were enshrined in the country's Constitution, and the Government was striving to address the needs of persons with disabilities in areas such as health, education and infrastructure development.

82. **Ms. Bhengu** (South Africa) said that no political democracy could survive and flourish if the majority of its people remained in poverty. Her country remained committed to promoting social cohesion by empowering and upholding the rights of women, young people, persons with disabilities, older persons and families, had developed a progressive legislative framework and was implementing targeted strategies and policies to combat poverty, deprivation and inequality. Poverty rates were falling. The South African Social Security Agency provided grants to some 16.8 million people with a view to reducing poverty and improving food security among poor households. South Africa also provided child support grants to the families of some 11 million children, and early childhood development initiatives were helping young children achieve success at school. The Government had also implemented the national Food for All Campaign to tackle hunger and malnutrition.

83. Proposed amendments to the Older Persons Act would strengthen safeguards for older persons and ensure that they could live in dignity. South Africa reaffirmed its strong support for the adoption of a United Nations convention on the rights of older persons, as existing international human rights instruments failed to make explicit reference to the rights of that group. As a multicultural society, South Africa viewed the family in its diverse forms as the fundamental building block of development, and a key contributor to societal stability. Family-oriented policies were an essential element in integrated, comprehensive and inclusive approaches to development.

84. It was critical that persons with disabilities enjoyed access to justice, economic opportunity, employment, education, skills development, housing and health care services. In that connection, South Africa strongly supported the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, which was helping African States consolidate their efforts to build resilient and enabling institutions that responded to the needs of persons with disabilities. South Africa also acknowledged the many challenges faced by young people, including the difficulties that they encountered in accessing educational and employment opportunities, and stressed that, to successfully address those challenges, States must adopt holistic, multifaceted approaches.

85. **Mr. Yao** Shaojun (China) said that social development should be comprehensive and inclusive. Poverty alleviation, full employment and social integration were the three core areas of social development and should be promoted in a balanced manner. Efforts should be made to eliminate discrimination and ensure that all people enjoyed the opportunities and fruits of development. The growing and unsustainable gap between rich and poor was an affront to fairness and justice. Both the “invisible hand” and the “visible hand” should be employed, in order to integrate the complementary roles of the market and the Government.

86. Development should be pursued through reform and innovation, which engendered opportunities and momentum and served to stimulate development potential and growth, while fostering new core competitiveness. The year 2015 marked the twentieth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development, and countries should reflect on their experiences and lessons learned in implementing the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action.

87. Social development should be pragmatic and effective. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recently adopted at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda provided important guidance on the issue to Member States. Reducing poverty, promoting employment and improving social security and protection of vulnerable groups would free all people from want and afford them a dignified future.

88. Development should be inclusive and cooperative. Although countries had different abilities and levels of achievement, each of them contributed to and benefitted from global social development. International cooperation should be strengthened, and more emphasis should be placed on eliminating the inequalities among countries and on increasing aid to developing countries and capacity-building.

89. On the basis of China’s own national conditions and over more than 30 years of reform and opening up, the country had charted a path of social development that was distinctly Chinese. China had largely achieved the Millennium Development Goals, reducing the number of people living in poverty by 439 million and demonstrating remarkable success in a number of areas, including education, health and disability. In

2014 alone, poverty had been eradicated for over 10 million rural poor, and 7,515,000 persons with disabilities had received rehabilitation services. In the first half of 2015, 7.18 million new jobs had been created for urban inhabitants nationwide. Currently, 846 million and 656 million people received basic retirement pensions and basic medical insurance, respectively. China had been making efforts to improve the conditions for management of schools in impoverished areas, ensuring that 40 million students had nutritious meals to eat every day.

90. In his recent address at the World Summit for Social Development, President Xi Jinping had made systematic proposals concerning issues such as global development and announced a series of relevant initiatives. The Chinese Government planned to incorporate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into its Thirteenth Five-Year Plan, thus making a greater contribution to social development in China and abroad.

91. **Ms. Adhikari** (Nepal) said that Nepal had been implementing various national plans of action based on the outcome documents of international conferences. The new democratic Constitution of Nepal not only protected the fundamental freedoms, human rights, human dignity, social justice and social and economic rights of the people, but also supported those provisions by conferring constitutional status on various institutions, such as the National Human Rights Commission and the National Dalit Commission. Further, the Constitution set out the principles of proportional inclusion and representation, upheld a rights-based approach to development and had ambitiously broadened the rights of women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and other marginalized communities. For example, it guaranteed that women would hold 33 per cent of seats in the national parliament and ensured gender balance in the highest elected offices.

92. The mandatory provisions of the 24 human rights instruments to which Nepal was a State Party had laid a foundation for ending all discrimination. The current thirteenth development plan of Nepal focused on reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment through targeted programmes to enhance the skills and capacity of marginalized people. While the social security programmes in Nepal might not yet be sufficient, they covered senior citizens, widows,

deprived ethnic and indigenous groups, persons with disabilities and incapacitated persons.

93. The Government was committed to ensuring that all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, had access to free compulsory education. Youth employment had been the greatest challenge in Nepal, and the Government was making every effort to create employment opportunities.

94. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must be integrated into national and subnational mechanisms. Nepal called on the international community to make greater efforts to accelerate its support and provision of financial and technical assistance to countries such as Nepal, with predictable and commensurate means of implementation and enhanced levels of partnerships on all fronts.

95. **Ms. Sztandera** (Poland), speaking as a youth delegate, noted with deep concern that youth and other disadvantaged and marginalized social groups were still most affected by high rates of unemployment. Young adults in particular must be empowered through quality teaching and training. In recent years, governmental and non-governmental investment programmes in science and technology hubs, centres of entrepreneurship, outreach projects, scholarships and paid internships had enabled students and graduates in Poland to display their potential by creating new products, setting up businesses and involving themselves in political and voluntary work. However, the scarcity of quality internships and graduate employment was still a concern. International organizations should set exemplary standards and create opportunities for future leaders.

96. **Ms. Szwajda** (Poland), speaking as a youth delegate, expressed alarm at the lack of political engagement of young people and the failure to recognize their needs and opinions. Local youth city councils, the youth branch of the lower house of Parliament in Poland and annual delegations to international sessions of the European Youth Parliament demonstrated that political engagement was a necessity even at a very young age. Clear legislative regulation and purposeful social campaigning could address the inadequate academic environment, alarming rates of unemployment and lack of social activism. School curriculums should also be open to a

more flexible syllabus and educators should be encouraged to enhance their teaching methods.

97. **Mr. Eriza** (Indonesia) said that Indonesia had mainstreamed the post-2015 development agenda into its national development planning, which recognized the multisectoral approach needed to promote sustainable development. Pro-poor, pro-job, pro-growth and pro-environment policies were staples of its development strategy, and eight of its nine national development priorities were related to social development. Indonesia continued to synergize social investments to build the human capital necessary for economic growth. Various social mobilization programmes, social empowerment measures and social protection programmes had been developed and implemented.

98. Youth, which constituted a quarter of the population of Indonesia, were a central feature of the national development agenda, both in the medium- and long-term plans. With a view to boosting the productivity of young people, the Government had been increasing and improving access to health services and decision-making processes, and improving equality in and quality of education, inter alia by increasing the budget allocation for social development programmes for the poor. Furthermore, it had allocated more than 20 per cent of the annual budget to education, made education compulsory until the age of 12 years and provided vocational training for youth. It was also exploring ways for young people to open their own businesses and sharpen their skills, by providing microfinance and job training, as well as expanding creative industries.

99. With regard to the elderly, the Government was focused on providing a supportive environment, enhancing their health and well-being, and ensuring their active participation and involvement in development. Given the impact of social and economic development on the relationship between youth and older persons, it would be constructive to establish an intergenerational dialogue, which could help develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to the shifting population structure.

100. The paradigm for persons with disabilities must be shifted from charity-based to community-based. Indonesia was in the process of developing new national legislation on disability.

101. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that poverty eradication through people's empowerment had always been one of the highest development priorities of the Government of Bangladesh and it was following a people-centric model to realize its Vision 2021 for a poverty-free, prosperous country. Under this vision, Digital Bangladesh was improving lives and livelihoods, with people receiving over 200 services from 5,275 digital centres.

102. To benefit from the demographic dividend, the Government was investing heavily in education and skills development for the younger population, and had introduced innovative informal education for those not in school. In the past five years, the national literacy rate had doubled. Education was provided free of charge for girls up to the twelfth grade, and on the first day of each school year, 326 million textbooks were distributed at no cost to the students. Midday meals had been introduced in many schools and stipends were provided, mainly to girls, as incentives to keep them in education. Various skill-enhancement training programmes had been adopted and arrangements had been made to provide microcredit on easy terms to encourage trained youths to become productive entrepreneurs.

103. The family, as the fundamental unit of society, was the best place to ensure the rights and development of vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and persons with disabilities. The national policies of Bangladesh were thus directed to empower members of the family. Newly adopted legislation aimed to ensure the rights of parents in their old age.

104. In order to move towards a transformative inclusive society for all, global trading and financial regimes and institutions must be fair and take into account the difficulties of developing countries, especially the least developed countries. Better results had been achieved with the Millennium Development Goals that had been either publicly funded or donor-funded, and it was therefore imperative to mobilize means of implementation, resources and technology transfer to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

105. **Mr. Aji** (Brunei Darussalam) said that Brunei Darussalam had put in place several policies and programmes to promote the rights and welfare of the elderly, including an old-age pension scheme. A special committee on the elderly and persons with disabilities had been formed in April 2008 to protect the

well-being of the elderly and people with special needs. On 1 January 2010, the retirement age had been raised from 55 to 60 years. The Government had introduced a supplementary contributory pension scheme, which provided a fixed income or annuity to those who had reached the mandatory retirement age. Two activity centres had been set up to cater to the needs of the elderly and promote active ageing. Government hospitals and several public health service institutions had established special counters or fast lanes for the elderly. Since 1999, Brunei Darussalam had been celebrating the International Day of Older Persons, which helped emphasize the importance of the elderly and acknowledge their contribution to society and the country.

106. Nevertheless, challenges remained, such as the need for comprehensive policies and benefits, including public services for the elderly in remote areas. A strong and stable family institution was therefore crucial and continued to be an important part of the social fabric, providing the best environment for the elderly. Brunei Darussalam had thus established several programmes to strengthen and empower families in caring for the elderly. The special committee on the elderly and persons with disabilities was working with a special committee on the family institution and women to coordinate and implement an action plan for the well-being of the elderly.

107. Mindful that the population of those aged 65 years and over in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was projected to reach nearly 90 million by 2035, ASEAN member States were committed to building a community that promoted the quality of life and well-being of the elderly and had reflected those commitments in national and regional declarations. ASEAN would continue to build on and strengthening partnerships among ASEAN member States and with other development partners in its efforts to promote the interests of older persons.

108. **Mr. Shava** (Zimbabwe) said that an expanding and robust economy was essential for ensuring inclusive development, social integration and sustained social spending. Zimbabwe had already begun transforming its economy to enhance industrialization, value addition, sustainable growth and infrastructure development and create full, productive employment and decent work for all.

109. Young people constituted 41 per cent of the population and 59 per cent of the labour force. Of those working, 58 per cent were in the informal sector and accounted for a sizeable proportion of the working poor. Addressing unemployment and under-employment, especially among the young, was a pressing priority. The key was access to quality education at all levels, which meant that all children should complete post-primary education and that educational systems should be aligned with labour market demands. Zimbabwe was currently reviewing the school curriculum accordingly. Vocational training, lifelong learning and informal apprenticeships also needed to be strengthened to provide “second chance” education for young people, particularly girls and persons with disabilities.

110. The Government was currently implementing the third generation of its decent work programme, which included leveraging its partnership with the local private sector, labour representatives and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to establish a skills training programme for youth. The programme would promote community-based technical and vocational skills development, expand training to groups that were often disadvantaged and focus on improving the quality of the informal apprenticeships that were widespread in Zimbabwe.

111. Various policies and measures had been put in place to promote and protect the rights of other vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and older adults, including cash transfer programmes. The well-being of individual members of society, in particular children and young people, was dependent on the existence of strong and well-functioning family units. Ensuring a balance between initiatives that targeted individuals and family-focused approaches was therefore imperative.

112. Despite its importance, social protection alone would not yield sustained poverty eradication. It must be complemented with policies that addressed the root causes of poverty and empowered people to take charge of their own destiny and prosperity.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.