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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 4 October 2010, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Tommo Monthe . . . . . (Cameroon)

## Contents

Expression of sympathy on the death of the Chairperson of the Working Group on the Right to Development

Statement by the Chair

Organization of work

Agenda item 130: Programme planning

Agenda item 27: Social development

- (a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly
- (b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family
- (c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing
- (d) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Expression of sympathy on the death of the Chairperson of the Working Group on the Right to Development**

1. **The Chair** expressed his sympathy to the delegation of India on the death of Arjun Sengupta, Chairperson of the Working Group on the Right to Development, and extended his condolences to the family of the deceased.

### **Statement by the Chair**

2. **The Chair** hoped that delegations would work to find common ground and undertake to respect the rules of procedure. He invited delegations to be punctual and concise. While no one-size-fits-all approach could be followed, given the diversity and complexity of the issues before the Third Committee, care must be taken not to focus on individual situations. Fundamental values were universal and must underpin the quest for the well-being of all.

**Organization of work** (A/65/250, A/C.3/65/1, A/C.3/65/L.1 and A/C.3/65/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1)

3. **The Chair** said that the numbering of the agenda items contained in document A/C.3/65/L.1 had changed and that the new numbering was reflected in document A/C.3/65/1. The list of documents issued under each agenda item was contained in document A/C.3/65/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1. Recalling the recommendations concerning the conduct of the Committee's work in chapter II of the report of the General Committee (A/65/250), he stressed the need to reduce the number of General Assembly resolutions and reports requested of the Secretary-General, and the need to keep resolutions short and more action-oriented. Draft resolutions involving lengthy negotiations should be drafted as early as possible; time limits should be respected; the Secretary of the Committee or a member of the Bureau should be informed of delegations' intentions to initiate proposals; and, since the Committee would maintain a rolling list of speakers, delegations should be ready to take the floor earlier than scheduled, if necessary. He proposed to place any speaker absent when scheduled to speak at the end of the list, unless a change of place had been agreed in a timely manner with another delegation, and to limit statements to 15 minutes for delegations speaking on

behalf of a group of States and to 7 minutes for those speaking in a national capacity.

4. *It was so decided.*

5. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Committee) read out a list of special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council and Chairs of treaty bodies or working groups who would be submitting reports to the Committee during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. That information would be made available on the Committee's website and via "QuickPlace".

6. **The Chair** took it that, following past practice, the Committee wished to extend invitations to special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council and Chairs of treaty bodies or working groups, to submit their reports to, and interact with, the Committee.

7. *It was so decided.*

8. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Committee) said that document A/65/393 had been newly added to the list of documentation (A/C.3/65/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1) under agenda item 27 (b) and read out changes made to the programme of work (A/C.3/65/L.1).

9. **The Chair** took it that the Committee wished to adopt the programme of work contained in documents A/C.3/65/L.1 and Add.1/Rev.1, as orally corrected by the Secretary, subject to amendment.

10. *It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 130: Programme planning** (A/65/6 (Part One) and A/65/6 (Prog. 19))

11. **The Chair** said that no action by the Committee was currently required with respect to the agenda item.

**Agenda item 27: Social development** (A/65/89, A/65/307 and A/65/336)

(a) **Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly** (A/65/168 and A/65/174)

(b) **Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family** (A/65/173)

**(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing**  
(A/65/157 and A/65/158)

**(d) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all** (A/65/172)

12. **Mr. Sha Zukang** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) reminded the Committee that it had a great role to play in implementing the action agenda adopted at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals and urged it to consider social integration and cohesion as central to its deliberations. The social impacts of the global financial, economic, food and fuel crises persisted in both developed and developing countries and the world's poorest were often not adequately included in the planning and budgetary processes of programmes for the Goals.

13. Bearing in mind the dramatic increase in the number of persons aged 60 and older, which was due to rise to 2 billion by 2050, it was imperative to grant access to social services for all older persons and to increase contributory and social pensions in order to avoid any upsurge in the proportion of older persons, especially women, living in poverty.

14. On the subject of women, he welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, known as UN-Women.

15. Concerning persons with disabilities, who numbered 650 million worldwide, most living in developing countries, he urged States that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to continue mainstreaming disability issues in their development priorities in order to advance the rights and well-being of such persons.

16. With respect to indigenous peoples, he noted that progress had been made but that those peoples remained among the most disadvantaged in the world. He hoped that the Committee's deliberations would generate continuing support among Member States for the full implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

17. Concerning young people, who made up 44 per cent of the world's unemployed although representing only 25 per cent of the working-age population, he called for active participation by Member States in the

International Year of Youth, coordinated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with inter-agency collaboration, the aim being to help improve the prospects for youth employment. For meaningful and sustainable development to take place, issues of equality and social justice must be the centrepiece of policies.

18. **Mr. Gonnot** (Acting Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General under agenda items 27 (a) and (c), said that the report on the follow-up to the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/65/168) provided an overview of discussions held by the Commission for Social Development during its forty-eighth session on the priority theme "Social integration"; on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development; and with regard to the policy responses on employment and the social consequences of the financial and economic crisis, including its gender dimension. Obstacles to social integration, which was of critical importance to creating a society for all, included poverty, conflict and a lack of access to basic services in the case of developing countries, and inequality and marginalization in the case of some developed countries. Countries must put in place tailored policies and strategies based on such general principles as combating all forms of discrimination, participation by all citizens in public debate, the provision of essential social protection and access to education and health. The debates at the World Summit for Social Development showed that progress had been achieved, although much remained to be done to reduce poverty and inequality, create productive employment and promote access to decent work.

19. The document entitled "Comprehensive study on the impact of the converging world crises on social development" (A/65/174) emphasized that the global food, energy, financial and economic crises during the period 2007-2009 had profoundly affected social and economic development, particularly in the least developed countries. While many in developed countries had lost their jobs, savings and homes, people living in poverty in the developing world had been subjected to an unprecedented erosion of their living conditions, with worsening underemployment, malnutrition and infant mortality. In response to the

crisis, many developing countries had taken fiscal austerity measures which had mainly affected poor and marginalized social groups. Those with the means to do so had sought to strengthen social protection and although a number of industrialized countries had adopted expansionary policies, unemployment rates remained very high. The crises would have lasting social impacts and it was consequently for Governments to find ways of preventing new crises and of better managing any that did occur by adopting countercyclical macroeconomic policies and strengthening redistribution mechanisms. Greater international cooperation would also be required on issues ranging from global financial and economic governance to climate change and poverty eradication.

20. The report containing a comprehensive review of the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/65/157) took stock of the current status of the social situation of older persons worldwide and sought to account for the diversity of situations, the changing reality and perceptions, and existing international norms. The extremely high increase in the older population, which was expected to reach 1 billion in 2020, would profoundly alter the development challenges relating to economic participation, poverty eradication, health and human rights. In developing countries, many older persons continued to work out of economic necessity, even though some countries were starting to introduce minimum income programmes. Chronic diseases were the main cause of death globally among persons aged over 60, but health systems in developing countries were ill-equipped to deal with them. Older persons were also rarely involved in decision-making that concerned them directly since their economic and social contribution was often limited to the family and community. Several human rights treaty bodies had consequently identified older persons as being a vulnerable group requiring special measures of protection.

21. The report on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/65/158) offered an assessment of national efforts to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, including the provision of training for specialist health-care professionals, the organization of awareness-raising campaigns and the conduct of research work, and provided an update of activities of the United Nations system. It highlighted the fact that countries were becoming increasingly aware of the amount of abuse,

neglect and violence directed at older persons, particularly women.

22. The report entitled “Keeping the promise: realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond” (A/65/173) noted that, in terms of achieving the Goals, the rights of persons with disabilities were given little consideration. Concrete recommendations had therefore been made in that regard with a view to mainstreaming disability in tools and mechanisms for the Goals.

23. **Mr. Ouane** (Director of the Institute for Lifelong Learning of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) introduced the report of the Director-General of UNESCO on the implementation of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade (A/65/172), which assessed progress in the three priority areas for the second half of the Decade, set forth in General Assembly resolution 63/154. The Assembly had also requested UNESCO to develop a strategic framework for renewed cooperation and action and all partners were now contributing to the implementation of that framework. New figures issued since the report had been prepared were alarming: the absolute number of non-literate adults had increased, which was due not only to more and better data but also to ongoing poor-quality schooling. Moreover, the global adult literacy rate remained almost unchanged.

24. Those figures should not overshadow the key achievements of the past two years, which included strengthening of the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment, a reduction in gender disparity, the organization of such events as the Global Action Week’s Big Read campaign in 2009 and the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), and the implementation of literacy assessment instruments. A number of countries had adopted clearer and stronger literacy policies and plans, in addition to which programme delivery had been reinforced in specific areas, including multilingual programmes and the use of information and communication technologies. Many challenges remained, however. Funding was still woefully inadequate, notably as a result of the financial crisis, with donor countries continuing to neglect youth and adult literacy. Stronger international partnerships must also be developed; the nine high-population countries,

for instance, had made a commitment to that end at their Eighth Ministerial Review Meeting in June 2010.

25. Literacy had the potential to lift millions of individuals out of poverty and empower them to contribute to the development of a sustainable and equitable society. However, if nothing was done, there might still be over 700 million non-literate adults in 2015, a scandal in the age of the knowledge economy. As the closing of the Decade approached, it was critical to redouble efforts.

26. **Mr. Tarar** (Pakistan) remarked on the difficulty of access to financial resources for older persons and persons with disabilities and the importance of the family in caring for such persons. How could the family continue to play its role when migration was increasing, and how could financial resources be earmarked for older persons and persons with disabilities when multiple crises had diminished States' room for manoeuvre?

27. **Mr. Rastam** (Malaysia) said that his country had always believed that economic growth should promote equality and social development. In recent years, the question of social development had been continually raised at the United Nations in relation to the different crises and the need for States to strengthen social protection mechanisms. While that matter was not at issue, the fact remained that States now had less budgetary leeway and the global pattern had noticeably shifted towards promoting a better balance between social protection and economic growth, such as the relaxation of employment conditions, the application of less stringent rules to financial institutions and the adoption of more trade-friendly policies. Those policies were traditionally seen as the antithesis of social development policies. In such circumstances, how could the key priority areas identified by the World Summit for Social Development, namely poverty reduction, the promotion of full employment and decent work, and social integration, contribute to economic growth, particularly in a period of budgetary restraint, without increasing the financial burden on States? A gap was apparently developing between the work of the Second and Third Committees; the two should be better reconciled.

28. **Ms. Saeboenes** (Norway) asked about the situation concerning the inclusion of matters relating to persons with disabilities in United Nations literacy strategies and activities.

29. **Mr. Gonnot** (Acting Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) explained that the report on older persons was an investigative report that was not intended to prescribe specific measures. The conflict between changes in the family and society, on the one hand, and the crisis-induced lack of financial resources, on the other, existed in the most developed and poorest countries alike. Clearly, families should be helped to continue caring for older persons and some countries, despite limited resources, had indeed taken measures to that end. Emigration was an increasingly problematic issue, whether involving older parents who, following the death of a spouse, emigrated to join their children in a country unknown to them or, conversely, children who had emigrated and had parents to look after in their home country. It had not been possible to examine the question of emigration as thoroughly as had been hoped and conclusions were difficult to draw at the current stage. However, the matter remained under consideration.

30. Concerning the priorities identified by the World Summit for Social Development, the report on the social impact of the crisis addressed questions relating to the mandates of both the Second and Third Committees. The Secretariat was aware that the work of those two bodies was uncoordinated for institutional reasons and had stated that any innovative proposals on the subject would be welcome. The problem had in all likelihood had a bearing on the definition of overall development goals.

31. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs had been concerned with persons with disabilities for over 20 years and the adoption of the Convention had given new impetus to the issue. An inter-agency working group had elaborated guidelines with a view to enabling organizations of the United Nations system to include that issue in all aspects of their work. While it was some years since the Convention had been adopted, the adoption of those guidelines was imminent and their implementation set to commence within the next few months.

32. **Mr. Ouane** (Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning) noted that the question of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in education strategies had been a major theme of the forty-eighth session of the International Conference on Education, the First World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education and CONFINTEA VI. Significant efforts

had been made in that area and countries were demonstrating innovative ways of meeting the needs of persons with disabilities of various types. UNESCO had also recently instituted literacy programmes emphasizing the specific needs of persons with disabilities.

33. **Mr. Al-Shami** (Yemen), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, recalled that the three pillars of the World Summit for Social Development remained the priority areas of social development and were essential to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Despite the progress made over the past 15 years in the implementation of international instruments (such as the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol), hunger, extreme poverty, unemployment, inequalities, marginalization, conflict, discrimination and the global financial, economic, energy and food crises continued to hold back social development, including the achievement of the Goals. In that context, the Group of 77 and China reaffirmed its commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and the further initiatives for social development adopted by the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

34. He urged the international community to take practical joint steps to remove obstacles preventing peoples living under foreign occupation from enjoying their rights.

35. He reaffirmed the need to strengthen global partnerships and international cooperation for development through national ownership of development strategies. Welcoming the proclamation of the International Year of Youth, he noted that the upcoming twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 would provide an opportunity for Governments, the United Nations and civil society to promote the objectives set out within that framework.

36. In view of the rapid increase in the number of persons aged 60 or over, urgent action was needed by the international community as a whole. In accordance with established practice, the Group of 77 and China would submit two draft resolutions under agenda item 27.

37. **Mr. Lambert** (Belgium), said that he was speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

38. Despite the steps taken to address the global financial crisis, low-income countries in particular remained vulnerable to the social consequences of the economic difficulties. He wished to recall that the four pillars of the Copenhagen Programme of Action were essential for the achievement of social development goals. The outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals had focused on international cooperation for development and on the need to address social and economic inequalities and to include the poor in decision-making for achievement of the Goals.

39. The Commission for Social Development had adopted by consensus a resolution on social integration, which it reaffirmed was a precondition for sustainable economic growth. It was essential in that regard to put poverty reduction and the promotion of employment and decent work for all at the centre of recovery strategies worldwide. International cooperation in that area was crucial. The European Union therefore welcomed the first meeting of the Group of 20 employment and labour ministers, held in Washington in 2010, which had shown clearly that a sustained global recovery would be brought about through employment creation, improvement in the quality of jobs and poverty reduction. It had launched its own strategy, Europe 2020, which was based on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and the ongoing fight against poverty. In order to help workers adapt to post-crisis restructuring, the strategy would put in place policies to foster education, lifelong learning and skills development strategies, and would support the employment of young people, a particularly vulnerable group.

40. The European Union reiterated its commitment to promote the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Recalling that the meeting of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention held in New York in September 2010 had focused on the need to work towards social and

economic independence for persons with disabilities, he referred to the development of a new European strategy that would set out the priorities for the following 10 years.

41. Noting that gender equality was a fundamental aspect of social integration, he said that the European Union welcomed the establishment of the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

42. Ageing was a universal phenomenon. Older persons should be provided with adequate social protection as well as lifelong training, since increased life expectancy could result in people working longer.

43. **Ms. Flood-Beaubrun** (Saint Lucia), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that, by highlighting the uneven progress in implementing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the Secretary-General's report (A/65/168) had enabled the international community to reach consensus on the need to promote social integration. Development assistance must continue but the whole of society, including youth, the elderly and the disabled, was responsible for finding sustainable solutions to development problems.

44. Since the special geographical situation of the Caribbean Community made social integration difficult, initiatives had been taken, particularly in the areas of social welfare and public health, to promote freedom of movement between member States. However, the global economic crisis had considerably hampered progress in achieving social development targets, including the Millennium Development Goals.

45. Eight months after the earthquake, and despite generous international assistance, over 1 million Haitians were still living in deplorable health conditions, without access to basic services. CARICOM was mobilizing for the recovery and social development of Haiti and, in particular, had recently created a fund to promote the participation of the regional private sector in reconstruction. It was important to allocate resources to mitigate the negative effects of climate change so that the social development of the poor countries, particularly affected by natural disasters, was not jeopardized by those phenomena.

46. The family was the bedrock of society, which was the focus of social development. CARICOM therefore reiterated its support for the measures adopted at the national, regional and international levels in the context of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. In addition, it believed that young people should be given the means to escape from the cycle of poverty and participate constructively in decision-making processes that affected their lives. It also supported the measures outlined by the Secretary-General for the implementation of the recommendations of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, since the contribution of older persons was essential to development.

47. The socio-economic impact of non-communicable diseases posed a challenge to development efforts and CARICOM therefore welcomed the decision taken by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/265 on prevention and control of non-communicable diseases to hold a high-level meeting on the subject in September 2011.

48. In conclusion, she emphasized the urgency of achieving social development goals and the importance of collaborative efforts at all levels.

49. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, recalled that the members of the Group supported the three pillars of social development: social integration, poverty eradication and decent work for all. He congratulated the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on its election to chair the Commission for Social Development, in which one of the priority topics was poverty eradication, and welcomed the Secretary-General's report in document A/65/168.

50. Social integration required an unconditional commitment by Governments and society to the creation of a social, democratic, multi-ethnic and multicultural order based on enjoyment of fundamental rights by all. In addition to being a question of moral duty and economic efficiency, social integration was also the expression of a social compact designed to ensure the level of development necessary to meet the population's needs. In that connection, the Rio Group welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 64/292 on the human right to water and sanitation.

51. In view of the current economic and financial crisis, the Rio Group agreed with the Secretary-General that donors and international financial institutions must strive to reduce debt and refrain from imposing conditions that restricted social spending and programmes. States must adopt social welfare and economic growth policies to benefit the most

vulnerable groups such as young people and the elderly. The Rio Group countries were therefore pursuing various policies to promote social development, stimulate economic growth, create jobs and enhance poverty relief programmes.

52. The international community must continue to adopt concerted measures at the multilateral and regional levels to overcome the food crisis and mitigate its effects on the most vulnerable people, and rural development and agricultural production should be promoted. The question of food security, and particularly the crisis provoked by spiralling food prices, was of great concern to the members of the Rio Group, especially because of its social implications and its effect on workers' purchasing power. The campaign against hunger and poverty required new types of international solidarity and cooperation to supplement national efforts.

53. It was crucial for the developed countries to do everything necessary to make their markets more accessible to developing countries' exports, to continue lightening the debt burden so that repayments were not an obstacle to development, to promote the beneficial effects of foreign direct investment on development, to increase technology transfers and to improve the international financial architecture.

54. The Rio Group countries were actively engaged in formulating comprehensive social strategies to help the elderly and considered that the international community should focus more closely on the problem of ageing, particularly by ensuring the promotion and protection of the rights of the elderly and improving implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action at all levels.

55. The growing incidence of non-communicable diseases was worrying, since they were the cause of half the deaths in the world. In low-income and middle-income countries, those diseases overburdened the health system. Noting that they posed a threat to the socio-economic development of the developing countries, the Rio Group welcomed the decision adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/265 to hold a high-level meeting in September 2011 in order to find a multisectoral response to the problem.

56. The Rio Group had always advocated respect for the rights and dignity of women, indigenous peoples, young people, the elderly, migrants and disabled persons, who were often excluded from national

development and continued to be discriminated against. Noting the importance of the question of young people for Latin America and the Caribbean, he said that measures should be taken to enable them to receive the necessary education and training to find decent work and build a more prosperous society. On the subject of indigenous peoples, the Rio Group supported national initiatives for the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the attainment of the main goals of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

57. With regard to persons with disabilities, the Rio Group was endeavouring to ensure their full social, political, economic and cultural integration by addressing questions of concern to them in its development policies.

58. Lastly, he noted that the economic and social contribution of migrants to development was not always recognized. In view of the universal nature of the migration phenomenon, dialogue and cooperation at the international, regional and bilateral levels were important and the human rights of all migrants must be protected.

59. **Mr. Ntwaagae** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the economic and financial crisis, the energy crisis and food insecurity had a profound impact on social development, undermining prospects for reducing poverty, hunger, unemployment and inequality and making the goal of social integration more elusive.

60. The growing adverse impact of climate change compounded the problems of poverty, underdevelopment and disease and those combined challenges were jeopardizing development efforts in the region and its efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

61. Despite the challenges, the Community was committed to achieving its social development goals, continuing to implement initiatives under the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and related regional protocols and declarations. It was also committed to fulfilling continental and international commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Second Decade of Education for Africa, the



Ouagadougou Declaration on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa and the Decent Work Agenda in Africa (2007-2015).

62. In the area of education and skills development, significant progress had been made in terms of harmonization of education and training systems in the region. An assessment made by the SADC secretariat of the status of education had revealed significant progress in the region in universal primary education, adult literacy and youth literacy. All the members in the subregion had adopted quality assurance systems to improve the relevance and quality of education.

63. The Community continued to pay special attention to the harmonization of employment and labour policies, regional labour migration, labour market information systems and social dialogue and capacity-building for social partners.

64. It had also developed a regional strategy to address the growing problems affecting orphans, vulnerable children and youth. Those problems were exacerbated by the impact of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, poverty and the global economic crisis.

65. Although important milestones had been reached, much remained to be done for SADC to attain its social development goals. Only support in the form of sustainable financial resources (official development assistance, debt relief and cancellation) from the international community and development partners could help the developing countries to achieve inclusive social development.

66. The Community remained committed to the principles enshrined in the outcome document of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and reaffirmed that social integration was the key to social development.

67. **Ms. Crivelli** (Switzerland), speaking as the youth representative of Switzerland, said that access to training and productive employment were international priorities. A young person who was educated, knowledgeable and independent was not only a major asset to the economy, but also a driving force for social cohesion.

68. Young people should be provided with moral support, for example, from career counsellors, and with financial support through minimal social protection and the creation of apprenticeships and internships, drawing on strengthened public-private partnerships.

That would help to reduce the risk of social marginalization and of young people losing their way as they transitioned from training to working life. Discriminatory practices affecting the employment of young people (such as underpayment and excessive workloads) must be eliminated by setting up a training system which combined formal and informal education, and infrastructure to help them to manage their professional futures. Those steps would in turn help to strengthen the national economy and make it more dynamic.

69. The traditional family-based social structure was becoming increasingly characterized by high individual mobility, rapid social and economic changes, and extreme inequalities. Convinced that the participation of all groups of society, including immigrants, the poor and young people, was required in order to strike the right social balance and find a solution to their problems, Switzerland had made the participation of young people central to its reform of youth policy.

70. Young people wanted to be recognized as indispensable to resolving current social and economic problems. The theme of the International Year of Youth, "Dialogue and Mutual Understanding", aimed not only to promote harmony among young people of different origins and social strata, but also to promote intergenerational cooperation, which must be strengthened through the creation of synergies, the sharing of knowledge and by pooling together the particular strengths of each age group.

71. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) said that the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals had shown that social development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially in the least developed countries, were being hampered by the rise in poverty, the consequences of the global economic crisis and climate change, the food and energy crises, organized crime in all its forms, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

72. In response, the United Nations was called upon to play an essential role, not only in maintaining international peace and security and protecting human rights, but also in helping the international community to address its challenges. In that regard, Egypt welcomed the Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health.

73. Regrettably, in his report on the follow-up to the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development (A/65/168), the Secretary-General had emphasized the role of Governments without sufficiently addressing that of the United Nations system. In addition, he had highlighted the importance of investment in social protection, without underlining the role which the private sector could play in that regard. While the report cited several regional and international initiatives on social development, it did not mention successful individual initiatives such as that of Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, who had founded Grameen Bank, or that of the First Lady of Egypt in support of the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking.

74. Aware of the importance of international action for the decisions of the Copenhagen Summit to produce results on the ground, Egypt called upon the Secretary-General to consider a programme of action or a new initiative aimed at mobilizing political and financial support for social development efforts, including programmes to combat poverty and unemployment in developing countries, especially the least developed countries.

75. The Egyptian Government, which attached considerable importance to social development, was committed to bolstering the social dimension of its development programmes. Particular attention was therefore paid to the poor and to people with low incomes. In June 2010, the People's Assembly had adopted a new draft law to reform the social insurance system through increased social justice.

76. In the health sector, Egypt was well on its way towards achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5, as its maternal and infant mortality rates had dropped considerably since 1990.

77. In the area of education, school enrolment rates had reached unprecedented levels and school dropout rates had fallen; the quality of teaching and girls' enrolment rates had improved; and practical steps were being taken to combat illiteracy, provide social protection for poor families and respond more effectively to the needs of the elderly and children.

78. The Egyptian Government was also striving to promote the involvement and role of women in society and in political life. During the November legislative elections, 64 additional seats in the People's Assembly would be reserved for women.

79. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Egypt ensured that those persons, especially children, could exercise their rights fully, particularly in the area of education. A draft law was currently being prepared to protect and promote the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

80. **Mr. Wang Min** (China) said that the world economy was undergoing a slow and precarious recovery, the impact of the international financial crisis persisted and employment recovery lagged noticeably behind economic recovery. At the same time, the development of many countries continued to be hampered by a multitude of global problems such as climate change, the food and energy crises, communicable diseases and natural disasters. The recent High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals had refocused the attention of the international community on the issue of development and had provided new impetus for the achievement of development goals by reviewing lessons learned over the past decade and formulating a plan of action for the next five years.

81. The Chinese delegation believed that the international community should focus its efforts on establishing conditions conducive to economic development in order to promote social progress, providing greater support to developing countries, enhancing exchanges of experience among developing countries and expanding South-South cooperation.

82. China had adopted a people-centred, integrated and sustainable approach to development in order to accelerate the transformation of its mode of economic development, and to more quickly readjust income distribution patterns, the urban-rural development structure and the industrial fabric. China had improved its delivery of social services, had implemented more proactive employment policies and was facilitating access to social security and primary health care. In 2009, the Government had increased spending on education, health care, social security, employment, housing and culture by 31.7 per cent. As a result of its efforts, health insurance coverage had been extended to more than 1.2 billion people.

83. China was also committed to combating illiteracy. Structures with broad participation had been set up across all sectors of society and literacy campaigns were conducted in rural and poor areas. In 2008, the illiteracy rate among young people and adults

had fallen to 3.58 per cent, making achievement of the literacy goal for both almost a reality.

84. China provided assistance to other developing countries to the best of its ability and contributed to their economic development and to the improvement of their people's living standards. It helped to build hospitals and schools in Africa and elsewhere, distributed free medical equipment and drugs and dispatched medical personnel on missions to developing countries. It had granted scholarships to more than 70,000 students from developing countries and provided training to 120,000 trainees from 173 developing countries and regions. It had also reduced and cancelled the debt of the least developed countries. China would continue to provide tangible support to other developing countries in their self-development efforts within the framework of South-South cooperation.

85. **Ms. Burger** (Germany), speaking as the youth representative of Germany, said that the United Nations should reform its structures in order to make its processes more transparent, and that Member States should set aside their national agendas in order to act as united, rather than divided, nations.

86. The International Year of Youth generated mixed feelings, which showed not only that the United Nations was aware of the importance of youth, but also that it was not able to fulfil their expectations. The German delegation therefore called on Member States to use the remaining months of the International Year of Youth to improve their record in that regard.

87. Convinced that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was technically feasible, young people called on all Member States to double their efforts to that end. Clearly, the Millennium Development Goals were only an important first step towards a world where extreme poverty was found in history books rather than at the centre of international policy.

88. Young people wanted to be appreciated as equal partners and to be masters of their own destiny, participating fully in decision-making and helping to find solutions to their problems in a transparent and democratic manner.

89. **Mr. Parker** (Germany), also speaking as the youth representative of Germany, said that Member States should include youth delegates, selected through

a transparent and democratic process, in their official delegations to all international conferences.

90. Furthermore, discrimination often deprived young people of the possibility of becoming active members of society. More than half a century since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it was unacceptable that some categories of people were still discriminated against, persecuted and even killed, solely owing to their sexual orientation.

91. Young people demanded equal access to formal and non-formal education, and more financial and structural support for youth-led organizations. They feared for their future, especially in times of crisis, and requested Member States to take action to ensure that every young person fulfilled his or her potential in his or her chosen profession.

92. **Ms. Grekula** (Finland), speaking as the youth representative of Finland, said that in a world where half of the population was under 30 years of age, the role of youth in the global economy and in peace and development must be recognized.

93. Many young people in North Africa, the Middle East and, to a lesser extent, Europe were facing poverty and unemployment.

94. In 2009, there had been 81 million unemployed people between 15 and 24 years of age. Over the next 10 years, 1.3 billion young people would be seeking to enter the labour market. The majority of the world's unemployed youth lived in countries with no social security system and so, even if they managed to find a job, they still lived in extreme poverty. Given their position in society, young people could play a crucial role in eradicating poverty.

95. Youth unemployment also gave rise to frustration and xenophobia. It also provided fertile ground for criminal activities. It was therefore crucial for children and adolescents to understand the influence of their choices in society.

96. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals was key to solving the current problems facing young people. Although the deadline was approaching, those Goals could still be achieved if Governments committed themselves fully to the task, as they had decided to do at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals.

97. She welcomed in that regard the creation of the Youth Employment Network which, if given the necessary support, could help address the current situation. Young people were not just seeking employment; they also wanted to be treated as equal partners for development who could help to resolve the current crises.

98. To that end, it was important for young people to participate directly in decision-making. Their participation in the General Assembly could serve as a model at the national, regional and local levels and could be expanded over time.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*