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Chair: Mr. Critchlow (Vice-Chair) (Guyana)
later: Mr. Hussein Haniff (Chair) (Malaysia)

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*In the absence of Mr. Hussein Haniff (Malaysia),
Mr. Critchlow (Guyana), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

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

Agenda item 27: 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/66/124 and A/66/226)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family *(continued)* (A/66/62-E/2011/4, A/66/121, A/66/61-E/2011/3, A/66/128, A/66/129 and A/66/136)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing *(continued)* (A/66/173)

1. **Mr. Gálvez** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, reaffirmed the Group's support to the work of the Commission for Social Development and its work on eradicating poverty through new strategies and strengthened commitment to social development. Governments and societies must ensure social integration and achieve an equitable, democratic, pluri-ethnic and multicultural social order based on the universal recognition of all human rights, including the right to development.

2. Social integration was a moral duty and a matter of economic efficiency, as well as an expression of a social contract of solidarity and humanism. Broad additional measures were needed in order to ensure inclusive development and a more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth and to improve access to basic universal services as a means of combating poverty, exclusion and of promoting social integration. The Rio Group had welcomed the adoption of resolution 64/292 on the human right to water and sanitation in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

3. In the light of the negative effects of the global economic and financial crisis, Governments must ensure that development assistance was not weakened. The Rio Group endorsed the recommendation by the Secretary-General that international financial institutions and donors must reduce debt without imposing conditions restricting the policymaking authority of national

Governments, with particular regard to social programmes and spending. States must adopt the measures needed to respond to the crisis, including through job creation, and guarantee that benefits reached those most affected, such as young people and the elderly. Policies must continue to guarantee protection of basic social spending in health and education. The countries of the Rio Group were pursuing various policies for promoting social development, stimulating economic growth, creating jobs and reinforcing anti-poverty programmes.

4. The international community must continue to adopt regional and multilateral measures to overcome the food crisis and mitigate its effects for the most vulnerable, focusing on rural development and agricultural production. It was important to address the social aspects of the crisis, particularly the effects on workers' purchasing power. New forms of international cooperation and solidarity were needed to eradicate hunger and poverty, help strengthen national efforts, guarantee access to nutrient-rich foodstuffs and ensure a more participatory, socially inclusive world.

5. Developed countries must take the measures needed to open their markets further to exports from developing countries, to continue reducing the debt burden, to promote the beneficial development effects of foreign direct investment, expand technology transfers, and improve the international financial architecture in order to prevent future financial crises.

6. International cooperation, including the commitment by developed countries to devote 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) to official development assistance, as well as South-South cooperation, technical cooperation and the sharing of best practices, were essential to promoting development. It was also crucial to undertake the necessary reforms to the financial and economic system.

7. The increase in the number of older people would be the greatest in developing countries, as mentioned in the Report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/66/173). The countries of the Rio Group actively promoted the inclusion of older people through broad-based social strategies. The international community should give more attention to the issue of the ageing of the population, including through the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons, as well as through implementation of the Madrid International

Plan of Action on Ageing. In that context, the Group firmly supported the possible creation of new mechanisms for promoting the rights of older persons.

8. The countries of the Rio Group endorsed the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases. Furthermore, national and international measures to foster employment and combat poverty must take into account equality, social integration and the inclusion of a gender perspective, as the full employment of women was essential to achieving a satisfactory level of economic and social development.

9. In the context of the International Year of Youth, the countries of the Rio Group had actively participated in regional and international youth-related conferences, including the World Youth Conference held in August 2010 in Mexico and supported the outcome document of the United Nations High-level Meeting on Youth. Young persons' participation in educational programmes at all levels must be ensured in order to build a more prosperous society, by preparing them for decent work.

10. The countries of the Rio Group would support national initiatives for implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the main objectives of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (2005-2014). They considered the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as an essential instrument in actively promoting the full social, political, economic and cultural integration of persons with disabilities by including disability issues in development programmes.

11. Tackling the universal phenomenon of migration required bilateral, regional and international dialogue and cooperation. The human rights of all migrants must be guaranteed, and their economic and social contribution recognized, in the light of the key role migration could play in the development and prosperity of all countries of destination, origin and transit, through the vital skills migrants had to offer. In that context, he drew attention to the fourth Global Forum on Migration and Development held in Mexico in November 2010. The growing trend towards the criminalization of migration was of deep concern, as was the fact that migration policies did not incorporate human rights.

12. Lastly, the countries of the Rio Group endorsed the view that the multidimensional aspect of poverty required new and effective strategies to help achieve

internationally agreed development goals, particularly the MDGs. The United Nations and the international community must play a more active role in order to prevent any setbacks and support developing countries' efforts.

13. **Ms. Simeonova** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Bulgaria had been committed to youth matters and was one of the few countries that had a programme allowing young people to participate in the drafting of youth-related resolutions at the highest level. All young people should be provided with an education according to their abilities, interest and needs, and the quality of education needed to be improved worldwide, as many young people did not have the necessary knowledge or qualification upon graduation and often ended up unemployed. Education fostered global development, and should be a priority for all countries.

14. The Government of Bulgaria had a national education policy which aimed to increase school participation. It recognized that improving the quality of education would improve the country situation overall and stimulate the economy, leading to stability and turning knowledge and innovation into the driving force of the economy. Drawing attention to the World Program of Action for Youth, she noted that young people were influential and had the potential to transform a nation. They needed to be included in national decision-making processes and their views must be taken into consideration, particularly in matters affecting them. Regrettably, most Governments ignored youth in the preparation or implementation of youth policies, leaving many young people feeling undermined, which often created tension in society and could result in violence and crime. It was thus important to recognize them as skilled, powerful individuals capable of devising effective solutions. Giving young people a chance to express their views made them feel confident, aware of their duties in society, and gave them a purpose, encouraging them to become active members of a democratic society.

15. **Ms. Lovtchinova** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that while Bulgaria's progress in developing its youth delegates programme was noteworthy, more needed to be done to address the major problems facing youth in the country, such as the growing time lag between graduation and employment and the inefficiency of school career centres. That could be addressed by including more practical training

courses and extracurricular activities to help young people to develop the social, professional and technological skills required on the job market, and by enhancing communication between the employment and educational sectors.

16. Reducing unemployment was a top priority for her Government, as evidenced through its adoption of a renewed employment strategy for 2008-2015, which was expected to increase the overall employment rate, including among youth, which remained unsatisfactory.

17. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country had not been spared from the negative effects of the global financial and economic crisis of capitalism, which had reinforced the commercialization of the rights to health, food, work and education and impeded the achievement of international social development goals, including the MDGs and the goals of the World Summit for Social Development. The peoples of the world were suffering the effects of imperialist policies such as the violation of the sovereignty of States, the extermination of populations in the name of human rights, the destruction of historic cities and the pillaging of the natural resources of developing countries. Contrary to the prevailing rhetoric, global poverty, hunger, misery and inequality were in fact growing.

18. Social development could not be achieved under the current capitalist model; the social dimension of development models must thus be recovered to help create new, participatory forms of human organization based on solidarity.

19. Despite the crisis, the Government of Venezuela maintained social investment as a priority in its national budget: in 2010, it had allocated more than half of its tax revenue to that sector. In exercise of its sovereignty and self-determination, it had opted for a society where social justice prevailed, as evidenced *inter alia* by its high ranking on the human development index, significant reduction in extreme poverty, its budget allocation to health and its high rate of access to safe drinking water. The Bolivarian Revolution was making progress towards the eradication of poverty and overcoming inequalities, and had also helped to further develop policies to empower young people, particularly through the establishment of the Ministry of the People's Power for Youth. Family was key in national social development policies, as evident through a number of programmes recognizing the value

of housework and providing comprehensive care for women and families living in extreme poverty.

20. He urged Member States to pave the way for the adoption of effective measures during the next session of the Commission on Social Development to tackle the real problems impeding the achievement of social development and the full enjoyment of human rights and democratic freedoms.

21. *Mr. Hussein Haniff (Malaysia), Chair, took the chair.*

22. **Mr. El Farouq** (Morocco) said that it was crucial for the international community to address the direct and indirect effects of the global financial crisis by providing an adequate response through the social dimension of public policies. In that respect, his Government endorsed the recommendations in the reports of the Secretary-General on the "World social situation 2011: the global social crisis" (A/66/226) and 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). The establishment of an effective and adequate universal social protection system was key to reducing the vulnerability of certain segments of the population who lived in a situation of financial insecurity and precarious employment.

23. His Government had set up a strategic oversight committee to address social development, maintain employment, improve the cash flow of businesses affected by the economic downturn and help diversify markets in various sectors of the economy.

24. Among the national measures in place to address social issues was a human development initiative, which, during the period 2005-2010, had directly benefited more than 5 million persons, including through income-generating activities that had helped to create more than 40,000 jobs. In the period through 2015, its operations would be improved to better combat poverty in rural areas and social exclusion in urban areas, including through access to improved social services for marginalized groups.

25. Turning to the work of the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, he said that further consideration should be given to its proposals on a new international instrument devoted to the rights of older persons, and for the optimal use of existing mechanisms, with a view to strengthening the

protection of their fundamental rights. It was particularly important to combat the discrimination the elderly faced in the context of work and access to health, educational and financial services and decision-making. His Government welcomed the report on the rights and health of older persons that the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health had recently presented to the Human Rights Council. Older persons were not a burden to society, but an asset in the light of their accumulated experience and knowledge. His Government was preparing a national strategy for older persons, based on the recommendations of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, which would adopt a participatory approach. It was also important to address the ageing immigrant population in countries of origin and destination, to protect their rights and respond to their needs. States must work together to ensure that globalization went hand in hand with social development and economic growth.

26. **Ms. Mareková** (Slovakia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that while much attention was being paid internationally to the subject of education, very little attention was afforded to the education of minorities in particular, whereas their education was key to preserving their cultural heritage, language and traditions. The education of minorities must be inclusive and culturally appropriate in order to prevent conflict between majority and minority populations, combat xenophobia and reduce marginalization and thus the likelihood of minority youth resorting to violence, a growing phenomenon in Europe.

27. The Roma was one of the largest ethnic minorities in Slovakia and in Europe as a whole. The issue of their education affected not only the countries where the Roma lived, but had cross-border implications which made it a pressing international concern. Although the Goal for all children to complete primary education by 2015 would officially be achieved in Europe, that only reflected majority groups, whereas an alarming number of Roma children in Europe were nowhere near achieving it. Aware of the urgency in tackling those and other issues, her Government had developed a strategy for tackling Roma-related problems, focusing inter alia on access to education for Roma children and eliminating segregated education, a practice through which Roma children received substandard education in schools for students with

mental disabilities. She urged the international community to act on the urgent matter of the education of minorities, as her Government could not effectively address such a complex matter on its own. In that respect, an international platform for States to exchange information and experience related to the education of minorities was needed, with efforts focusing on both formal and informal education to ensure the full inclusion of minorities in society.

28. **Mr. Shin Dong-ik** (Republic of Korea) said that in order to address the global social crisis and achieve the goals of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, it was crucial to step up efforts to eradicate extreme poverty in the world, particularly through employment growth. In that regard, by 2012 his Government planned a significant expansion of the target group receiving intensive support through employment opportunities and entrepreneurship training. Social protection also played a key role, and his Government had substantially increased its welfare budget, helping it to further strengthen welfare services tailored to socially marginalized groups.

29. Particular attention should be paid to vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and the elderly. In that context, his Government had been making sustained efforts to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including through the introduction in 2010 of an act on pensions for persons with disabilities, which aimed to improve the welfare of that group and enhance its social inclusion by means of a monthly pension in accordance with the degree of disability and income level. It had also introduced an act on discrimination against persons with disabilities which included remedies, and was closely monitoring its enforcement.

30. It was also important to address the elderly as a marginalized group. In that context, he welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, which could serve as a reference for many countries struggling to cope with the emerging issue of ageing. His Government had been developing and implementing policy initiatives, including a basic pension paid to 70 per cent of persons over 65 years of age and a long-term care insurance system helping older persons with mobility issues in particular. Moreover, under a new five-year plan for an ageing society 2011-2015, more than 300,000 jobs would be created for retired baby

boomers and infrastructure would be expanded to help the elderly to engage in volunteer and leisure activities.

31. **Ms. Ahn** Lee-seul (Republic of Korea), speaking as a youth delegate, said that efforts should be made to reduce the gap between and within various socio-economic levels in society, and in that respect, education could play a key role. Improving young people's access to education would help them not only in terms of employment opportunities, but would also help to lift them out of the poverty they might have inherited. As part of her Government's efforts to help support low-income students, it provided free lectures to help prepare for college entrance examinations via the public educational broadcasting system. High-quality classes were also provided in public schools in the regular educational curriculum. That type of free support benefited students from low economic levels and in rural areas.

32. It was also important to further strengthen efforts for the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with diverse cultural backgrounds, by providing additional education services. In order to address the sharp growth in the immigrant population in her country, her Government had implemented such measures as providing Korean language education programmes for the female spouses of immigrants. Providing sufficient support to socially vulnerable groups would help foster social development at the individual, national and global levels.

33. **Mr. Bacin** (Romania), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the active participation, employment and education of youth were needed in all societies. With their capacity for innovation and enthusiasm in embracing change, youth could ably address some of the most complex problems facing the world today. As recognized in the youth strategy of the European Union, youth involvement was not only desirable, but instrumental in shaping a better social, political and economic environment for the benefit of all. Encouraging youth participation must begin with information and consultation in order to build confidence in both young people and the relevant institutions and thus lay the groundwork for a strong partnership.

34. While youth participation was on the rise in Romania, only a small percentage of young people were involved in volunteer activities. He thus appealed to all young people to step up and engage in national,

regional or international programmes aimed at improving their standing in society.

35. **Ms. Năstase** (Romania), speaking as a youth delegate, said that it was not enough to discuss youth employment in international debates; action was needed, particularly by providing access to adequate education and training, in line with the demands of the complex labour market. Young people must be provided with the chance to gain work experience through internships and their active participation in youth non-governmental organizations, as complementary to their education and in line with the times.

36. In order to address youth unemployment in Romania, her Government had passed a new law encouraging and facilitating the establishment of small and medium-sized companies by youth. In addition, various private companies were partnering with universities and non-governmental organizations to offer internships to young people. It was important to strengthen career-oriented guidance at the secondary and university levels, and to further consolidate partnerships between public, private and non-governmental organizations. The benefits of non-formal education and volunteerism must also be considered as part of the solution. She appealed to all Member States to continue scaling up efforts to create better conditions for young people, so that they could continue to develop their skills, fulfil their potential and actively participate in the building of a better society.

37. **Mr. Ruiz** (Colombia) said that one of his Government's social development priorities was to reduce poverty and social inequality, in addition to achieving the MDGs. His Government had made significant progress in that area, particularly regarding access to universal primary education and improving gender equality, and had made achievements in health, including a substantial reduction in the infant mortality rate, improved maternity care and a reduction in mortality from cervical cancer. Colombia's political Constitution of 1991 set out a comprehensive range of citizens' rights, making it mandatory for the State to gradually ensure the well-being and development of its population. Furthermore, the country's economy was growing in spite of the world financial and economic crisis; it was expected that its gross domestic product (GDP) would grow by over 6 per cent by the end of 2011. Nevertheless, great challenges remained to its social policy, including poverty, inequity and a high rate of informal employment.

38. His Government had a national development plan in place to tackle those challenges which focused on strengthening social protection and creating jobs, such that small and medium-sized enterprises could enter the formal sector of the economy and foster employment, particularly for youth. In the light of such challenges, it was important for the United Nations system to ensure coherence among all its agencies to enable sustainable and efficient actions.

39. His Government was endeavouring to ensure that gender mainstreaming and youth policies cut across all sectors of the economy, and to implement its programmes for the development of ethnic groups, a national system for persons with disabilities, programmes focusing on children and policy on older persons, with particular emphasis on economically and socially vulnerable groups. Reaching those groups remained a major challenge, particularly since inequalities remained in middle-income countries such as Colombia. The time was right to review social development models in order to link the social, economic and environmental pillars to better respond to global needs. In line with guidelines from the World Summit for Social Development, his Government was promoting further links between economic and social development to generate income and business capacity in a productive and efficient way, while ensuring human development and preserving the social fabric.

40. **Ms. Heshiki** (Japan) said that providing more employment opportunities was indispensable to the eradication of poverty. The international community must step up its efforts to implement international social development goals and create an environment conducive to the elimination of discrimination and social barriers in order to advance the social integration of vulnerable groups such as youth, older persons and persons with disabilities.

41. Japan's efforts to protect vulnerable groups included signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the establishment of a mechanism to ensure that their voice was heard and reflected in national policies, which reflected the "reasonable accommodations" that had been introduced through the Convention. An amended law for persons with disabilities approved in July 2011 would set up a commission to oversee the implementation and monitoring of relevant measures within a year.

42. On the issue of youth, it should be recognized that youth employment worldwide contributed to social stability, social development and poverty reduction. To address the issue of Japan's rapidly ageing society in which more than 20 per cent of the population was over 65, her Government was implementing comprehensive measures through two new laws, and continued to foster employment opportunities and facilitate a reliable public pension system and medical insurance reform for the elderly.

43. Her Government had promoted volunteer opportunities for youth and older persons, and, in that connection, had submitted, jointly with the Government of Brazil, a draft resolution to the Committee on the tenth anniversary of the international year of volunteers, emphasizing the need to promote all forms of volunteerism to benefit all segments of society, including vulnerable groups.

44. **Mr. Wang Min** (China) said that he welcomed the work the United Nations had undertaken in recent years in promoting social development. It would be necessary to continue with the implementation of the outcome document of the Commission on Social Development and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, to promote compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to give priority to the implementation of the most recent outcome documents on youth, health and education. Indeed, the United Nations should pay more attention to social development issues, as should Governments, particularly in the current post-crisis era. Governments should focus on ensuring that employment promotion and improvements to livelihoods were long-term strategies. Social development was the driving force, and efforts to tackle the economic crisis should not be made at its expense.

45. Support to developing countries should be scaled up, although a cautious approach should be taken in attaching aid conditions. Developed countries should honour their official development assistance commitments in good faith. Meanwhile, developing countries should broaden and deepen South-South cooperation. For its part, China adhered to a people-centred, comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable approach to development, including through a basic medical insurance system in place for urban residents and through universal, free, compulsory education. At the same time, his Government had been providing as much assistance as possible to other developing countries, covering such

areas of social development as public infrastructure, primary education and health care, and would continue to work within the framework of South-South cooperation to help foster social development and livelihood improvement.

46. **Mr. Kamau** (Kenya) said that the need to divert resources from social development to address global crises, such as the current drought and famine in the Horn of Africa, had significantly hindered countries from achieving their social and economic goals. There was a danger, in the midst of falling incomes, implementation of austerity measures, rising unemployment and cutbacks, that the exclusion of vulnerable members of society would become the norm. Therefore, the international community must cushion fragile developing economies. His Government had been taking measures to that end to safeguard the Kenyan economy in the form of, inter alia, provision of cash transfers to the aged and subsidies of essential foodstuffs.

47. Over the previous 20 years, the massive influx of Somali war refugees into Kenya had strained the delivery of social services and provision of security. There was a clear link between the refugee situation in Kenya and economic development, environmental degradation and security, problems exacerbated by the current drought and famine. In that connection, additional humanitarian assistance would be required for Kenya to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to lessen the suffering of its refugee population.

48. While the austerity measures taken by developed countries were popular domestically and made economic sense in the short term, they would ultimately undermine the ongoing progress towards social development targets.

49. Kenyan youth constituted an important national resource and development opportunity. Such challenges as social exclusion, unemployment and illiteracy impeded dialogue with youth and must be confronted. Moreover, inclusive and accountable governance institutions that integrated economic and social policies were fundamental in the creation of equitable societies. To that end, the Kenyan constitution enshrined equitable distribution of national resources through a system of governance that emphasized reaching marginalized areas and populations.

50. Measures taken by his Government to promote social integration included tax exemptions on equipment and facilities that improved the lives of persons with

disabilities, cash transfers to households headed by older persons and enterprise development funds targeting women and youth to encourage entrepreneurship and independence. The implementation of the Vision 2030 plan had put his country on the path to inclusive economic development. However, social and economic programmes would have to be scaled up in order to meet the needs of all. He called on the international community to work together to continue implementing the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

51. **Ms. De** (India), citing the global financial and economic crisis and its aftermath as major obstacles to further progress towards social development, said that her country's main goal was to promote inclusive and equitable growth that would benefit all sectors of society. Government initiatives in that regard included a rural employment scheme that guaranteed rural households 100 days of employment per year. Her country also regarded education as key in social development and aimed to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to 14 years of age, in addition to literacy campaigns for women and access to education for children with disabilities.

52. As one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, India had a comprehensive constitutional and legal framework to assist persons with disabilities, which included a national policy that facilitated medical care and rehabilitation and an affirmative action employment initiative. With regard to older persons, India had worked to improve their quality of life by providing basic amenities, in the context of a national policy on older persons and related legislation. In closing, she called on member States to redouble their efforts to transform the aspiration of economic and social development into a global reality.

53. **Mr. Khan** (Indonesia) said that his Government recognized the impossibility of achieving social development without a vibrant economy. Thanks to sustained economic growth, Indonesia had been able to continue pursuing social development goals but was currently forced to scale back some projections. To protect the economic and social gains achieved, his Government's policy of development for all combined financial, monetary and fiscal policies. A Government plan to accelerate and expand economic growth aimed to address the disparities that hindered Indonesia from

achieving the MDGs and the goals set forth in the Copenhagen Declaration.

54. Social investments would continue to be part of Indonesia's development policies. Financial measures had been implemented to control inflation and stabilize the prices of food staples in order to protect poor households. To improve food security, the budgetary allocation for the agriculture sector had continued to increase. His Government also promoted the access of vulnerable households to information and economic resources, in line with its priority of empowering the family and those most affected by economic insecurity. Indonesia was also working to create more job opportunities, especially for youth, and would continue to allocate 20 per cent of its budget for education. Social assistance and protection programmes, such as health insurance for the poor, were being provided, and initiatives to improve access to health care were ongoing. In addition, laws, regulations and policies were being adopted to promote and protect the human rights of older persons. Lastly, the Indonesian Parliament was working towards the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He called for continued partnerships with all stakeholders, including the private sector, in dealing with the social consequences of global economic crises.

55. **Ms. Sodov** (Mongolia), affirming her Government's commitment to achieving the Goals by 2015, said that 66 per cent of Mongolia-specific MDG targets had been achieved or were likely to be achieved by that date. However, poverty reduction, housing, environmental sustainability and gender equality remained major challenges and would require targeted interventions and redoubled efforts.

56. Recognizing that inadequate job qualifications and high unemployment rates remained a particular challenge for youth — a demographic that had always been at the centre of Government policy — Mongolia had declared 2011 the Year of Employment Promotion, specifically targeting youth.

57. In light of the growing role of cooperatives in promoting socio-economic development, the General Assembly had declared 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives. Her Government had established a national committee consisting of the representatives of relevant ministries, cooperatives and other stakeholders in preparation for its observance. In that connection, she hoped that all member States would participate in

its launch later that month, and that the draft resolution on cooperatives in social development, which her delegation would introduce for adoption by the Committee, would enjoy member States' support.

58. **Mr. Le Hoai Trung** (Viet Nam) said that the Vietnamese Government had made arduous efforts to maintain a balance between economic growth and social development, particularly in the previous few years, which had been marked by the negative impact of the financial crisis. As a result, the GDP had tripled between 2000 and 2010, while the poverty rate had dropped from 22 per cent in 2005 to 9.45 per cent in 2010. Moreover, improvements in quality of life could be observed in various areas, ranging from health care and nutrition to gender equality. Viet Nam had accomplished most of the MDGs ahead of the 2015 deadline, with the invaluable support of United Nations agencies and other development partners.

59. However, Viet Nam must deal with a number of challenges successfully in order to maintain the development momentum. As one of the countries worst hit by climate change, his country's failure to mitigate and adapt would result in a major setback and hinder attempts to accomplish the remaining Goals. His Government had formulated strategies on socio-economic development and social security, among other areas, to meet popular demand for improved education and health-care services.

60. Although the financial crisis was not caused by developing countries, their people and economies were the most vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the global economy, hence the need to assist the developing world in overcoming its challenges in striving for social development. In closing, he reiterated Viet Nam's commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as the initiatives for social development adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session.

61. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that multiple crises had made the achievement of the goals countries had set for themselves increasingly difficult. While social development goals transcended national boundaries, national Governments must remain committed to attaining sustained social progress, developing initiatives that addressed country-specific situations.

62. Eritrea regarded its youth as the main agent of change, involving them in national efforts to address the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment and investing in free, universal education. His Government's

development policies, which were closely linked to the MDGs, had enabled it to expand its provision of basic social services, in particular to rural areas where essential services had been either limited or non-existent.

63. A social policy informed by social justice and cohesion had put the country on track to achieve some of the social Goals, including reducing maternal and child mortality and reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, life expectancy had also increased from an average of 52 years in 1995 to nearly 60 years in 2008. Eritrea had renewed its commitment to achieving all the Goals — a formidable task — by formulating a five-year development plan whose objectives included poverty eradication, acceleration of access to education, and promotion of social solidarity and harmony among different ethnic groups.

64. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that her country had begun a new phase in social development characterized by the expansion of social services domestically and increased international cooperation in various fields. In addition, the comprehensive national agenda for social development aimed to improve the standard of living of all citizens and address the challenges faced by youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities and women. Based on its moral and religious convictions, her Government was fully committed to promoting human rights, social justice, and values and practices that ensured social cohesion.

65. With regard to the World Programme of Action for Youth, it was necessary to strengthen capacity-building and to assess and review the achievements and obstacles to its effective implementation at all levels. Qatar attached great importance to the International Year of Youth through the activities of its various youth, athletic, cultural and social institutions.

66. Her Government strove to ensure that older persons enjoyed their rights and lived in decent conditions. It backed the efforts of the United Nations Programme on Ageing, which required continuous support from Member States. The seemingly intractable differences on the issue of the family should not prevent Member States from finding common ground.

67. Acting on its belief that social development was the backbone for a healthy society, her Government had launched the National Vision 2030 plan, which defined specific economic, social and human objectives, the achievement of which would transform Qatar into a

developed nation able to guarantee a decent living for its people, in line with their aspirations and ambitions.

68. **Mr. Archondo** (Bolivia) said that his Government's development strategy promoted the idea of "living well", a concept that had its origins in his country's indigenous cultures, and which was based on solidarity among peoples and the enjoyment of natural resources in harmony with nature. That philosophy had inspired the National Development Plan which aimed to foster a dignified, democratic, productive and sovereign Bolivia. "Living well" implied more than simply improving living conditions. The ultimate goal was to provide equal opportunities to all, rather than supporting a minority that lived at the expense of many. In that regard, the role of Government had been strengthened as a guarantor of rights and the collective well-being. The new Constitution reaffirmed the human rights to life, food, decent work, and universal access to water and sanitation, among other basic services, which were not subject to concession or privatization. His Government had supported General Assembly resolution 64/292 and welcomed Human Rights Council resolution 15/9 on the rights to water and sanitation, which were important steps towards improving the situation of the millions who continued to live without adequate access to potable water.

69. The Government of Bolivia strove to provide free, universal health care to all its citizens. New policies had helped to eradicate illiteracy and had led to the construction of decent housing and transfer of land titles for agricultural use to vulnerable populations, in particular indigenous peoples and women. Social inclusion activities aimed at integrating persons with disabilities into economic, political and social life. Furthermore, constitutional guarantees had been provided to ensure youth their participation in development and older persons the right to quality of life. The nationalization of the hydrocarbon industry had enabled the provision of a pension to all persons over the age of 60, while the social security system was being amended to ensure protection and care for older persons.

70. The multiple world crises posed significant challenges to achieving a "society for all" and called for international cooperation, technical assistance and the transfer of technology. For its part, the United Nations system had a critical role to play in supporting national policies and supporting the objectives of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

71. **Ms. Prorok** (Ukraine) said that her Government welcomed the outcomes of the 48th and 49th sessions of the Commission for Social Development, which provided a framework for concrete actions to ensure social integration of all, especially young people, persons with disabilities, older persons and families. The prioritization of poverty eradication by the Commission had been an important response to the current global economic crisis. At the national level, her Government recognized that urgent financial measures must be taken in tandem with long-term socio-economic development strategies in order to ensure sustained growth, create jobs and improve living standards. Ukraine's own national poverty eradication programme for 2010-2015 included a social development component. Reducing unemployment was also a major priority, and in that regard, the Government sought cooperation with the International Labour Organization based on its Decent Work Country Programme. Youth participation in the development of economic and social policies and dialogue with trade unions would be another important aspect of improving economic growth.

72. At the international level, her Government had taken note of the recommendations issuing from the recent high-level meeting to mark the International Year of Youth and welcomed the declaration of 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives, which would raise awareness of the role such enterprises played in achieving development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals. The fourth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had been a positive step towards realizing the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the global development agenda. Ukraine would remain strongly committed to international cooperation in order to ensure sustainable development and social integration for all.

73. **Ms. Nyamudeza** (Zimbabwe) said that the issue of social development encompassed the most basic human rights and needs. In Zimbabwe, the impact of the global financial and economic crisis was compounded by the economic sanctions imposed by the European Union, the United States and their allies, which had further slowed growth and increased poverty in the country. The incidence of communicable and non-communicable diseases was on the rise, while the effects of climate change were wreaking havoc on the agriculture-based economy. In view of such challenges, implementation of national policies on education, employment, health and poverty eradication had

suffered. Her Government therefore welcomed the outcomes of several high-level events held during the past year aimed at generating the political will and resources needed to address the needs of the world's poor and vulnerable.

74. Recognizing that persons with disabilities, older persons and youth felt the impact of socio-economic problems most acutely, the Government of Zimbabwe would soon become party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and pledged to remain engaged in the discussions within the United Nations aimed at improving the situation of older persons. Youth had long been a Government priority and national policies had ensured youth participation in the economic, social and political life of the country. Unemployment remained a critical issue for youth, and she urged the international community to develop a global framework for youth development that would provide a plan of action, time-bound commitments and adequate resources. Her Government condemned the exploitation of young people, particularly in small, weak States, aimed at causing social upheaval for sinister and foreign political ends, and would continue to obstruct the efforts of those who would seek to do the same in Zimbabwe.

75. Zimbabwean society revered the traditional family recognized by the international community, not the various interpretations of the family that were currently emerging. Family was the most fundamental building block of humanity, instilling values and providing support to the individual in all phases of life. She urged the international community to establish a plan of action aimed at enhancing the role of the family in development. For its part, her Government was engaged in developing appropriate ways to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014.

76. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was the path to realizing social development, which required an increase in official development assistance and foreign direct investment in developing countries. National efforts must be complemented by such international interventions as debt cancellation for food-deficient countries and technology transfer in order to mitigate the effects of climate change. The principle of common responsibilities and differentiated actions should guide development programmes, whereby national ownership of policies was supported by global partnerships.

77. **Mr. Almossawy** (Iraq) said that social justice was one of his Government's top priorities, hence the importance it attached to achieving social development. Iraq was working to create an environment conducive to stability and peace throughout its national territory as a prerequisite for sustainable social development. Recalling the legacy of tyranny, war and economic sanctions in Iraq's recent history, he pointed out that his country was currently going through a difficult transitional period fraught with the challenges of a shift from a socialist to a market economy and security threats posed by terrorist attacks, which often targeted domestic infrastructure.

78. His Government's five-year plan aimed to spark an economic, industrial and agricultural resurgence by encouraging investment; creating job opportunities, especially for youth; and rehabilitating Iraqi industry. Tangible measures included providing soft loans and grants to professionals and entrepreneurs; supplying farmers with seeds, fertilizer and fuel free of charge and purchasing their crops at preferential prices; and pursuing an ambitious campaign to build 10 million housing units over 10 years, which would have the added benefit of putting thousands of Iraqis to work.

79. Out of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the provisions in its own constitution relating to social welfare, Iraq was striving to build an integrated society in which all resources and human capabilities would be placed in the service of social development. Initiatives undertaken to that end included organizing foreign labour migration into the country, in line with international laws and instruments to which Iraq was a party; remedying the problems of employment and disguised unemployment by creating productive work; and curbing rural-urban migration by improving services offered to persons living in rural areas.

80. He expressed appreciation for the assistance given to Iraq by the United States of America, the United Kingdom and other friendly nations, along with international and non-governmental organizations, in such areas as consultancy and debt reduction. His country looked forward to productive cooperation with the international community as it traversed the difficult period, and hoped for assistance with the lifting of Chapter VII restrictions, which impeded the achievement of social development, as Iraq no longer posed a threat to international peace and security.

81. **Mr. Shukri** (Sudan) said that concerted international efforts were required to strengthen the

framework put in place by the Copenhagen Summit in 1995 and achieve the social development goals set forth therein, particularly in light of the obstacles presented by the global economic and financial crises and climate change, among other challenges. Donor countries must also provide the necessary development assistance and complete remission of debts that stood in the way of comprehensive development projects in developing countries, increased their burden, and hindered their progress towards development and stability.

82. Peace, a fundamental element in any stable and socially integrated society, had been attained as a result of his Government's fulfilment of all commitments contained in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement it had signed in 2005, under which it had agreed to and accepted the outcome of a referendum on the status of South Sudan, in addition to its cooperation in establishing the foundations of the new State. Sudan had also signed an agreement aimed at bringing peace and security to Darfur.

83. Sudan's national plan to combat poverty entailed a series of specific measures, including, inter alia, the expansion of universal primary education, assistance for graduates with finding work, achievement of food security and potable water supply. A supreme council had been established to oversee the national strategy to combat poverty, under the guidance of the President.

84. The Islamic Zakat Chamber, a charitable, voluntary social security mechanism, played a vital role in combating poverty and achieving social justice by sharing the financial resources of the well-to-do with the needy and downright impoverished socio-economic classes. The Chamber's work extended to providing support for educational institutions and health-related projects, religious education institutes, as well as promoting youth employment and caring for the elderly within a family environment.

85. His Government had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and reconfigured a national council on persons with disabilities, stipulating that 50 per cent of its membership, as well as its head, would consist of persons with disabilities. Additional study was being done on the situation of persons with various disabilities, including autism, and work continued towards implementing international instruments in that area to which Sudan was a party.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.