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Chair: Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.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/67/179)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/67/61-E/2012/3, A/67/211 and A/67/153)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/67/188)

1. **Ms. Fahmy** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said that although the Group was happy to swap places with the European Union on the list of speakers for the particular item, it stressed that it did not intend to create a precedent or otherwise affect the rules and procedures of the Committee.

2. The Arab Group was disturbed that official development assistance was decreasing while poverty, unemployment and malnutrition continued to rise. The international community should not allow the effects of the global economic crisis to detract from efforts to fulfil commitments under the 1995 Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

3. Youth made up more than the third of the population of the Arab world, and the League of Arab States had issued an Arab Declaration on Youth Empowerment in 2006. Governments should respond to rising youth unemployment with national policies to provide decent work for young people and invest in education and training. The Group reaffirmed the importance of developing a global strategy on youth unemployment in accordance with the ministerial declaration of the 2012 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council and the outcome document of the 2011 High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth.

4. The Arab Group stressed the role of the elderly in passing on wisdom and traditional values to the next generation. Accurate statistics should be compiled on the condition of elderly persons so that more effective

policies could be developed to protect their rights. The family was the foundation of society, and should have protections against poverty, unemployment, marginalization and violence. The Group welcomed the mainstreaming of disability into United Nations development plans.

5. The Group deplored the deterioration in the political, economic and social condition of the Palestinian people. Restrictions continued to be imposed on freedom of movement. Arbitrary killings, arrests and land confiscation were increasing, and violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians was on the rise. The occupation impeded development, prevented infrastructure improvements, obstructed the provision of services to citizens, and did extreme damage to the Palestinian economy. The Group regretted the failure of the reports by the Secretary-General under the agenda item on social development to cite the practices of the occupation authorities as an obstacle to development, and expected that oversight to be corrected in the future.

6. **Mr. De Las Ovalles Colmenares** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that inequality had increased under the capitalist model imposed on developing countries, and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals remained under threat. The commercialization of human rights would not resolve the crisis, and the austerity policies applied in developed countries had worsened it, damaging social protection systems, worsening unemployment and violating workers' rights. The failure of power relationships characterized by violence, exploitation and domination called for a renewed social dimension, with the creation of new forms of organization based on solidarity, equity, equality, justice and respect for sovereignty.

7. His Government had anticipated the crisis and opted for social investment, promoting alternative development models and passing laws on social inclusion. Poverty and inequality had been reduced, literacy rates had risen, the level of malnutrition had fallen, health services had improved, unemployment had dropped, social protection for the elderly had been strengthened, and gender equality had increased.

8. The imperial Powers had proved their persistent disregard for the aims of the Charter of the United Nations through their actions towards the developing countries. His Government had created spaces for

development based on peace, international security, sovereignty, strengthened international economic cooperation, an eco-socialist development model, and fairer access for developing countries to world markets, investments and productive technology.

9. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean had opted for an agenda of unity and inclusion, which had inspired a number of regional mechanisms promoting development models resistant to capitalism. It was not too late for societies to achieve social development by becoming respectful, fair, free and sovereign.

10. **Mr. Wang Min** (China) said that social development had a direct bearing on the prosperity and well-being of peoples, and Governments should work to minimize the adverse impacts of the international financial crisis on social development. In his report on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/67/179), the Secretary-General had pointed out the importance of sustainable employment in the mitigation of inequality, eradication of poverty and promotion of economic growth. Countries should implement the outcome document of the 2012 annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council and set employment expansion as a priority goal of their development strategies. Vulnerable groups such as women and the elderly and persons with disabilities should be protected, and every effort should be made to reduce the impact of the financial crisis on education, health, social security and poverty alleviation programmes. His Government supported the convening of a High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and Other Internationally Agreed Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities.

11. Greater support to the developing countries was a prerequisite for sustainable social development. The developed countries need to fulfil their official development assistance commitments and their pledges of capital and technology transfer in response to climate change. The debt burden of the least developed countries should be reduced or cancelled, and protectionist measures should be avoided.

12. His Government had pursued a policy of employment expansion throughout the crisis. In 2011, over 12 million new jobs had been created. Over 95 per

cent of the population was covered by health insurance, and China's pension insurance system was the largest in the world.

13. As the world's largest developing country, China was also involved in thousands of development projects around the world. It had cancelled the debt of 50 highly indebted or least developed countries and had trained tens of thousands of workers for jobs in development projects. It would continue to support other developing countries within the framework of South-South cooperation.

14. **Mr. Cabactulan** (Philippines) said that the proportion of workers in vulnerable employment in developing countries was increasing and income inequality was on the rise both within and among countries. As nations strove to recover from the global crisis, they needed to provide for the needs of the disadvantaged. Employment discrimination must be eliminated, education and health coverage improved, and social protection expanded. Governments in developed countries needed to ensure that their policies were conducive to socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development globally, and that official development assistance was leveraged in support of the MDGs.

15. His country's 2011-2016 development plan promoted sustained economic growth, equality of opportunity, and effective and responsive safety nets. His Government supported the empowerment of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups such as women, children, youth, and the elderly. Along with Tanzania, the Philippines had sponsored the resolution calling for the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development, which was scheduled for 2013. He welcomed the recommendations for that meeting contained in the report of the Secretary-General on realization of the Millennium Development Goals and internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities (A/67/211).

16. **Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) said that despite progress made towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the world still faced severe challenges relating to unemployment, food insecurity, malnutrition, income inequality, and low quality of health care and education. Official development assistance had declined for the first time in many years, while protectionism was on the rise and drugs, transnational organized crime and corruption continued

to pose a threat to national security and the rule of law. Foreign occupation continued to affect economic and social development adversely in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan.

17. Poverty eradication was the greatest challenge facing the world. In its resolution 2012/9, the Economic and Social Council had urged developed countries to meet the targets of 0.70 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross national product to least developed countries, and to enhance efforts to provide developing countries with increased market access, technology transfer, financial aid and debt relief. His country welcomed the Secretary-General's Education First initiative and the joint programme of UN-Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the World Food Programme on accelerating progress towards economic empowerment of rural women. It also looked forward to a balanced, concise and action-oriented outcome document resulting from the 2013 High-level Meeting on Disability and Development, and stressed the need to mainstream older persons in national development strategies.

18. Following its recent revolution, Egypt had taken immediate steps to reduce income inequality, improve living standards, and increase minimum wage, social allowances and pensions. Combating corruption and repatriating funds transferred to foreign banks were also important elements of its economic and social development strategy. At both the summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in Teheran and the high-level segment of the General Assembly, his Government had proposed an initiative for the establishment of a United Nations body for youth issues, with particular focus on education, training, employment and political participation. Many successful youth initiatives had been launched in Egypt in partnership with the United Nations Volunteers programme.

19. **Mr. Zanazzi** (Switzerland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that 2012 marked 10 years since Switzerland had joined the United Nations. He was happy to see youth included among the priority areas of the Five-Year Action Agenda of the Secretary-General. The appointment of a special adviser for youth and the creation of youth volunteer programme

and action plan would give a voice to young people around the world.

20. The year 2012 was also the twentieth anniversary of the original Rio Earth Summit, whose outcome document had stressed the importance of education to sustainable development, and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. For minorities, access to education was often limited by discrimination, economic conditions and geographic location. The United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth promoted education based on mutual respect and tolerance. Education was one way for minorities to overcome disadvantage and become contributors to the community. The United Nations needed to act to fulfil the promise of the 20-year-old Rio Declaration to the youth of the world.

21. **Mr. De Sello**s (Brazil) said that the Rio+20 outcome document contained references to the right to education, the participation of young people in decision-making, the need for a global strategy on youth and employment, and access to information and participation for persons with disabilities. With regard to the latter, he hoped that the accessibility provided during the Rio+20 Conference would encourage the adoption of universal design and accessibility principles for all major future events, including the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, both also scheduled to be held in Rio de Janeiro.

22. His Government had launched programmes to promote social inclusion and eradicate poverty that were built around the three pillars of minimum income, productive social inclusion and access to public services. Universal access to health and education should be recognized as indispensable to breaking the cycle of poverty. His country's experience also suggested that tax policies designed to encourage small businesses were a powerful tool for fostering job creation.

23. As a country with one of the largest youth populations in the world, Brazil had been working with other Latin American countries to ensure that youth were included on the development agenda. The rapid growth of the elderly population also presented challenges. The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, in which Brazil was an enthusiastic participant, had

made significant progress on creating a better world for older persons.

24. **Mr. Ryan** (Australia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the cultural diversity of his country fostered a peaceful and tolerant society. In his travels throughout Australia in his capacity as youth representative, he had been struck by the common concerns and aspirations of youth of all social backgrounds and geographic locations. The new phenomenon of social media allowed young people to share those concerns and aspirations not just within their own countries but globally. Social media had demonstrated its power to catalyse democratic governments, spread early warnings of natural disasters and push private sector companies into using more ethical work practices. It was also being used to apply political pressure for greater focus on achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

25. However, the new media were not immune to old problems. Cyberbullying had proven to be a problem on the local level. Internationally, the digital divide was separating those who are technologically literate from those who were not. All groups across the social, geographic and age spectrum should have equal access to social media. It was important for the international community to create a structured process for youth voices to be heard at the decision-making table.

26. **Mr. Haniff** (Malaysia) said that the goals agreed at the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly were being held hostage by the global financial and economic crisis, persistent poverty, income inequality, unemployment, and climate change. His Government concurred with the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report (A/67/179) that countries should be encouraged to accelerate efforts and devote additional resources to creating employment opportunities, in particular for youth.

27. Malaysia had been among the earliest to formulate a national youth policy, which it had instituted in 1985. Its 2011-2015 economic plan allocated considerable sums for training young people who were outside of the school system and to encourage youths, and specifically young women, to start businesses. The recent Million Youth Gathering 2012 in celebration of National Youth Day had been a manifestation of his Government's recognition of the

importance of the younger generation that made up almost half the country's population.

28. He also welcomed the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing. In 2011, his Government had put in place a national policy and plan of action for older persons, based on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2000. Older persons in Malaysia received almost free health care and substantial discounts on transportation. It had also formulated a policy and plan of action for better integration of persons with disabilities into society, based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. His Government looked forward to the 2013 High-level Meeting on Disability and Development.

29. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that her Government's main tasks were to achieve social development, restore the people's rights and guarantee a high standard of living for all. Since 2007, it had reintroduced free health care and education and made progress on the eradication of poverty and extreme poverty. Its programmes allowed people to become productive and thus contribute to Nicaragua's economic and social development. Social spending would therefore account for 58 per cent of the 2013 national budget, with health and education seeing the biggest increases. The National Human Development Plan had made housing a top priority.

30. Poverty had been reduced, as shown by an increase in formal employment and a decrease in malnutrition. Her Government had restored the right to free health care for all, with resulting decreases in child, maternal and neonatal mortality. A vision care programme for low-income patients in conjunction with the Cuban Government had also been set up. The right to free education had been restored, leading to greater literacy and higher rates of school attendance. Food quality had been improved for hundreds of thousands of families. The Shelter Plan had become Government policy and had benefited 150,000 families since 2010; it was expected to affect 4,500,000 people by 2017. The Voices for All programme, supported by Cuba, had mapped the location of all persons with disabilities, allowing Government and municipal programmes to reach everyone without discrimination. Young people were mobilizing to support social programmes, and the Government planned to place priority on high-quality youth employment up to 2016. The right to dignified and active ageing had been

promoted through clubs for older adults, for whom free medical care was provided through coordination with health centres, and efforts were being made to improve pension coverage. In closing, she acknowledged the support received for those social development programmes from ALBA/TCP and the Petrocaribe project.

31. **Mr. Rakovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that in the context of the protracted economic crisis, cooperation to implement the decisions of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives was more important than ever before.

32. The Commission for Social Development was the primary international platform for discussion of social issues, including ageing, assistance to youth, strengthening the family and ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. The impasse that had occurred during the fiftieth session of the Commission in connection with the resolution on the priority theme was therefore a source of concern. Despite attempts by a number of States to undermine the authority of the Commission and create the impression that it had outlived its usefulness, the Commission should retain its role as an effective coordinator of international cooperation in the social sphere and a unique mechanism for dialogue among all groups of States.

33. Despite the current crisis, not a single social programme had been discontinued in the Russian Federation. Over the past three years, unemployment in the country had been reduced from 9.4 per cent to 6.2 per cent, and there was a particular focus on job creation, including for persons with disabilities. There were also incentives for small and medium-sized business. Those issues would be discussed in detail at a high-level international conference on practical implementation of the Decent Work Agenda to be held in Moscow late in 2012.

34. There were efforts to increase real wage growth, as well as to increase pensions and social welfare payments and expand the social protection system. Over the past decade, the number of people living below the poverty line in the Russian Federation had been reduced by half. There was a government programme to aid vulnerable groups, including the

elderly, young people and persons with disabilities, as well as measures to increase pensions each year and improve medical care for the elderly.

35. The Russian Federation had recently deposited with the Secretary-General its instrument of ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a step that provided an additional incentive to work to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in such areas as employment, inclusive education and access to facilities and services, *inter alia*. The World Programme of Action for Youth provided guidance for the development of youth policy in the Russian Federation. Stable employment was a youth policy priority, as was instilling in young people a sense of civic responsibility, tolerance, morals and an awareness of healthy lifestyles. Strengthening the family was crucial to social stability, and it was important to foster solidarity across generations.

36. **Ms. Reindi** (Germany), speaking as a youth delegate, said that in the course of her travels throughout her country, she had discovered that the environment, discrimination, and lack of participation in decision-making were among the issues that were of most concern to German youth. She called for greater involvement of youth in the political process; equality for all regardless of nationality, race, religion or sexual orientation; and greater attention to sustainable consumption and renewable energy.

37. **Mr. Rohde** (Germany), speaking as a youth delegate, said that a strong and reliable international framework to address the problems brought about by globalization was needed. Only a small number of Member States of the United Nations had implemented the World Programme of Action on Youth. Young people were eager to be involved in the creation of a better future; all they needed were more channels of participation.

38. **Ms. Rezai** (Sweden), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the July 2011 attack that killed 77 innocent people at a youth summer camp in Norway had been a reminder that the forces of racism and Islamophobia continued to exist around the world. The response to that attack had been more openness, democracy and humanity, rather than adding to the spiral of violence.

39. A modern security policy was needed that placed human security first by tackling such issues as

environmental threats and humanitarian challenges. As a child of immigrants, she was particularly concerned about the plight of refugees. Although race was not explicitly mentioned, immigration restrictions tended to apply overwhelmingly to people of colour. Migrant workers often faced discrimination that was ultimately based on race. Cross-border movement needed to be decriminalized and militarization of borders reversed. The Member States of the United Nations should give teeth to asylum laws and the principle of non-refoulement, and work to ensure compliance with General Assembly resolution 66/172 on the protection of migrants.

40. **Mr. Rogne** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that while travelling around his country, he had found that young people were consistent in their demands for greater participation in decision-making processes. The year 2015 would mark the deadline for the MDGs, which his Government that taken serious steps to meet. It would also mark the inauguration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Economic Community, which would bring about freer movement of goods and labour and provide greater opportunities for prosperity and development throughout the region.

41. Thailand had invested heavily in education, and its Government provided vocational training to young people that included hands-on experience in particular industries. Youth-led initiatives around the country validated the statement of the Secretary-General in his report on follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers that volunteers could significantly contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

42. **Mr. Sungkanand** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that educational organizations in Thailand had developed disability-inclusive curricula, including the provision of class materials in audio and Braille formats for the blind. Pension and health care coverage for older persons had been expanded. The Internet was creating many more opportunities for young persons to communicate and empower themselves to make positive changes in society.

43. **Ms. Matabadal** (Netherlands), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the United Nations was unique but urgently needed to demonstrate its relevance in a changing world. The perception of young people was that it was failing to meet the commitments it had made to improve their everyday

lives. Unemployment, hunger, lack of access to education and clean drinking water, conflict, forced marriages and unwanted pregnancies still affected 1.8 billion young people.

44. At the national and community level, funds should be raised in support of Education First, the Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education, to send 61 million children to school. Universities, the private sector and Governments should be brought together to provide the education young people needed for success on the job market. Programmes should be put in place to end child marriage and allow girls to realize their potential. Young people should be enabled to participate in governance and hold their Governments accountable.

45. Those activities should be done in partnership with young people, through independent, transparent and democratically elected national youth councils, with young people involved on an equal footing as decision makers. Time was running out for the United Nations to meet its commitments to young people, in particular young women.

46. **Ms. Ofoedu** (Austria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the Secretary-General had warned of a lost generation unable to find employment, while the International Labour Organization (ILO) had asserted that 75 million young people were unemployed or in unstable employment. Moreover, there had been increases in the number of people not in education, employment or training, and asylum seekers unable to work while waiting for residency permits. Despite young people's precarious employment situation, however, Governments had failed to take action. Policymakers should give asylum seekers access to the labour market, reform legislation, promote social protection programmes and end economic measures which reduced demand and output, thus generating fewer jobs for young people. Member States should instead implement expansionary fiscal policies.

47. Education could offer young people an alternative to unemployment, but many were unable to register because of their gender, socioeconomic status or location. Spending cuts following the financial crisis had worsened the problem.

48. The rates of neonatal and maternal mortality and the number of women and girls with an unmet need for contraceptives could be reduced if sexual and reproductive health services were provided to women,

ensuring gender equality and helping achieve the MDGs. Delaying pregnancy prolonged women's chances for an education, leading to more skilled workers and faster economic and social development.

49. Time had run out for meeting global challenges. Modern technological and intellectual advances contributed to equal rights for women and men, and could help build the future.

50. **Ms. Astiasarán Arias** (Cuba) said that the international economic and political order continued to be profoundly unfair and unsustainable, containing distortions which excluded the South's legitimate interests. The planet's survival was under threat, with millions living in poverty and the breach between rich and poor increasing. Hunger, extreme poverty, illiteracy, unsanitary conditions and premature death were a constant in many countries. Moreover, those most affected were the workers, the unemployed, the migrants and the poor of the countries that were least responsible for the current global crises.

51. Trade inequalities had worsened, official development assistance had decreased in real terms, technology transfer was limited, exports from poor countries to rich ones were restricted, and external debt had been paid many times over but was continually increasing, while the world continued to invest vast amounts in military expenses and waste enormous sums on illegal drugs. Poverty was far from being eradicated, with higher food prices leaving huge numbers of people suffering from chronic hunger or living in extreme poverty.

52. Unlike many countries, and despite the criminal blockade imposed by the United States of America and the effects of hurricanes, droughts and global crises, Cuba had achieved all the MDGs and exceeded some of them. It had invested heavily in health care, education, social security and assistance, and scientific and technological research. In addition, it had shared its resources with nations in need of assistance, through international cooperation. Much could be accomplished to ensure the right to development of millions of persons with relatively few resources, if the political will existed in the countries of the developed world, and if those countries met their official development aid commitments, thus repaying the debt they had incurred by plundering developing countries for centuries.

53. **Mr. El Faroua** (Morocco) said that all social forces should be mobilized in the fight against poverty. While his delegation welcomed the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/179), geographical inequalities relating to food security, malnutrition and access to basic services remained, constituting an obstacle to efforts to honour the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development, aggravated by the effects of the financial crisis. The individual should be placed at the centre of strategies for economic recovery, which required the sustained development of productive capacity and the promotion of human potential.

54. In 2005, the National Human Development Initiative had been launched to fight poverty and marginalization, with the help of a \$300 million loan from the World Bank. Those funds would be disbursed only on the basis of verifiable results and performance indicators agreed in advance.

55. The new Constitution established a vision of a society where all enjoyed security, freedom, equal opportunity respect for dignity and social justice. Economic and social rights were emphasized, reaffirming rights including equal access to health care, education, decent housing and a clean environment. A new health insurance scheme for low-income citizens offered free health care in State facilities; it would be expanded to cover 8.5 million people, or 28 per cent of the population.

56. The family was considered the fundamental unit of Moroccan society, and the Constitution enshrined its importance for education, security and protection, in order to guarantee its unity, stability and preservation. It had given all children equal status regardless of their family situation, and stipulated the creation of an Advisory Council on the Family and Childhood). Discussions on the implementation of the Council were ongoing.

57. **Ms. Pellosniemi** (Finland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people were often victims of armed conflict and were vulnerable to enforced recruitment by military, insurgent and terrorist groups. Many could not attend school or were isolated from their communities.

58. Massive youth unemployment, the social media revolution and the youth-led uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East had led to young people being seen as a threat, a perception which could prove

justified, since almost half of the world's population was under age 24, millions of those young people lived on less than \$2 per day, and only 300 million of the 1.3 billion entering the labour market in the following decade were expected to find a job. Moreover, 10 per cent of young people were not in education, employment or training, and risked turning to violence to express their frustrations, possibly leading to global unrest. To prevent that, young people's energy should be redirected, and conflict and post-conflict societies in particular should capitalize on their creative potential.

59. The Secretary-General had responded to young people's calls to be included in United Nations decision-making with high-level youth meetings in 2011 and 2012. Moreover, in January 2012 he had announced the establishment of the post of a Special Adviser for Youth, a system-wide action plan and a youth initiative under the umbrella of the United Nations Volunteers.

60. A global coalition had been formed to promote a Security Council resolution on youth, peace and security. Binding documentation regarding young people in armed conflict was needed to ensure the appointment of youth protection officers for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, the inclusion of young people as experts when the United Nations Department of Political Affairs Mediation Support Unit addressed peace processes, and mediation training for young people, particularly girls and women, as stipulated in Finland's National Action Plan for Mediation.

61. Young people should be recognized as a specific group in the United Nations system. They could not be ignored, and global and local structures needed to be changed to meet their demands. With sufficient support they could be agents of positive change.

62. **Mr. Shin Dong Ik** (Republic of Korea) said that disability-inclusive development should be pursued consistently, with more targeted national measures to close the gap between national disability policy and practice, and more effort to meet international commitments such as the MDGs and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

63. Since disability needed to be mainstreamed into the development agenda beyond 2015, his delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/211), which identified disability-related priorities

for that agenda, and looked forward to the high-level meeting on disability and development in 2013.

64. The international community needed to pay closer attention to youth poverty and unemployment, which had risen as a result of the financial crisis, which had disproportionate effects on young people. A comprehensive youth strategy was needed, with more social protection and decent work opportunities.

65. A holistic approach to ageing was necessary to better integrate older people socially and economically. His delegation noted with concern the conclusion of the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/67/188) that poverty tended to be worse among older people than in the population as a whole. His Government would explore solutions to the problem, which it took seriously owing to the rapid growth of the elderly population in the Republic of Korea.

66. He hoped that the outcome of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) High-Level Meeting and Incheon International Conferences on Disability, to be hosted by his Government later in 2012 would contribute to the international community's future discussions on social development.

67. **Ms. Yoo Ji-yoon** (Republic of Korea), speaking as a youth delegate, said that more effort was needed to improve access to information for persons with disabilities. The Republic of Korea had one of the highest rates of Internet use in the world, but web accessibility was 20 per cent lower for persons with disabilities than for others. The Government was striving to provide information in formats such as Braille and sign language, but it was the very structure of information which should change. That called for considerable resources, public-private partnerships, academic research and public awareness.

68. **Mr. Ansari Dogahesh** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the United Nations should identify best practices, and catalyse exchanges between developed and developing countries and South-South cooperation. The high-level meeting of the General Assembly in 2013 would draw attention to the situation of persons with disabilities and help establish a plan of action for disability-inclusive development. National structures should be harmonized with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other instruments.

69. The protection of persons with disabilities was fundamental for his Government, which had passed comprehensive legislation in that area in 2004 and created a medical fund to treat persons with disabilities. Comprehensive provisions for children with special needs had been set out in the 2011-2016 five-year development plan. The State Welfare Organization was preparing the national report on the implementation of the Convention, which would be submitted at the end of 2012.

70. His delegation supported the recommendation of the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/67/188) on long-term support to older persons. His Government had prepared a strategic plan on ageing which would be operational by 2013.

71. **Ms. Saebønes** (Norway) said that her Government expected to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2013. Since the Secretary-General had repeatedly noted the invisibility of persons with disabilities in national and international policies, her delegation welcomed the references in his report on international development goals for persons with disabilities (A/67/211) to the inclusion of disability in several United Nations resolutions. Moreover, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled "The future we want" highlighted the fact that sustainable development required the participation of persons with disabilities, including children, young people, girls and women. Her delegation also welcomed the United Nations initiatives in the area of system-wide coherence, including the Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

72. Persons with disabilities should be taken into consideration in consultations on the development agenda beyond 2015, and be included in programmes related to health, education, women's development, democratic participation, and emergency preparedness and relief, an area in which her Government had taken particular interest.

73. Her delegation hoped that the 2013 high-level meeting on disability and development would produce a precise, action-oriented document. The measure of the success of the United Nations was not how much it promised, but how much it delivered.

74. **Ms. Vige** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the December 2011 report of the United

Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity (A/HRC/19/41) had revealed human rights violations on all continents. She recalled that the Rio+20 outcome document contained a commitment by the international community to protect individuals' right to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to sexuality.

75. Education was essential to improving the situation of sexual and gender minorities; in that connection, the achievement of MDG 2 would ensure sexual education for young people, which, together with access to information, would allow them to take control of their sexuality and contribute to society.

76. She urged Member States to affirm the universality of human rights and protect everyone from violations, to sign the European-Union-backed statement on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, to start regular reporting on human rights and sexual orientation in each country, and to provide sexual education for their populations.

77. **Mr. Diallo** (Senegal) said that the MDGs would be achieved only if social inequalities were eliminated, and that societies would progress only if human rights, economic growth and development were linked.

78. The rights of persons with disabilities were also human rights, and States should therefore take measures to prevent discrimination and attack the prejudices which deprived them of their rights and freedoms.

79. Approximately 15 per cent of the world's population lived with a disability, and could thus be considered the largest global minority. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognized that the obstacles they faced to full participation in society were a fundamental aspect of their disability, and called on Member States to ensure that they had the same access as everyone else.

80. Stigmatization, sociocultural barriers and other prejudices, resulting from a focus on the limitations of persons with disabilities rather than their intellectual potential, should be confronted. National political will and global partnership could be decisive in the fight against that form of discrimination.

81. **Ms. Dávila Dávila** (Colombia) said that her Government's priorities included the reduction of

poverty and social inequality and the achievement of the MDGs. She was pleased to report high economic growth in Colombia in 2011. Between 2010 and 2011, inequality had decreased for the first time in 20 years, and poverty, extreme poverty and unemployment had also been reduced. Her delegation supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (A/67/179), since policies to fight poverty and inequality should be based on productive employment, decent work, social protection, and more investment in education, health, agriculture and infrastructure.

82. Poverty eradication should be addressed from a multidimensional perspective to break down the barriers to social inclusion. The solutions should be innovative and involve all sectors of society. Under her Government's youth employment policy, new laws to create partnerships with the private sector and generate decent work saved employers money when they hired people under 28. Because of those laws, in 2011, 155,753 companies had entered the formal sector and 400,000 young people had found their first job.

83. Her Government's disability policy was focused on social inclusion, and she hoped that disabilities would be taken into consideration in the development objectives beyond 2015. The elderly also deserved special attention, and her Government was aware of the importance of their social integration. Rural poverty had decreased between 2010 and 2011, with agriculture driving job creation and contributing to a drop in unemployment.

84. Colombia was on the right road, but successful social programmes aimed at the poorest families, gender equality and young people should be strengthened, and partnerships with the private sector in the education, health and employment sectors should be pursued.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.