



# General Assembly

Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General  
24 December 2012

Original: English

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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 4th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 9 October 2012, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Mac-Donald ..... (Suriname)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 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/67/153 and A/67/211)**

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

1. **Ms. Yakivu** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the Congolese legal framework complied with United Nations social development principles. The Constitution recognized the right of vulnerable groups and minorities to education, employment, culture, health, decent housing, protection and self-development. Her Government had therefore improved interministerial cooperation in those sectors, which were included in its growth and poverty reduction strategy, aimed at reducing the gaps in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Government had also drawn up an advocacy document for the mobilization of resources to attain the MDGs by 2015 in order to improve living conditions.

2. That improvement would require stability and growth based on stronger governance and peace; a more diverse economy and more employment, particularly for young people; improved access to basic social services and stronger human capital; environmental protection and the fight against climate change; and a better business and investment climate for public-private partnership.

3. However, armed conflict and political instability in the east of the country jeopardized the achievement of the MDGs and the safety of vulnerable groups. Her delegation, therefore, requested the international community's support to end the conflict.

4. **Mr. Apakan** (Turkey) said that, despite the perception that Turkey had a young population, it was the second-fastest ageing country in the world; 23 per cent of its people were expected to be over 65 by 2050. At the global level, meanwhile, 22 per cent of

people would be over 60 by that date. The labour force would also age, leading to less employment, lower saving rates and possibly less economic growth. Meanwhile, as family structures changed, intergenerational solidarity was weakening and older persons faced discrimination, poverty, violence, abuse and a lack of specific services.

5. An active debate was therefore needed to meet challenges such as mitigating the economic consequences of an older population, making older persons economically active and productive, providing social protection in a difficult demographic context, and giving older persons a better chance to participate equally in daily life. Answers were needed in the areas of health care, housing, education, financial services and the combating of isolation, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/67/188). There was a lack of coordinated United Nations policy on the social integration of older persons, and his Government sought to create fresh impetus in that area.

6. Older persons should be kept independent rather than seen as a burden. In some countries they had been provided with jobs to boost economic growth; as a result, more of them were in good health and had valuable skills. To make them into an engine of growth, the international community should focus on health, education and retirement policies.

7. The United Nations should include ageing in the development agenda beyond 2015 and the sustainable development goals. The international community had a civic responsibility towards the elderly. A society of all ages was needed, in which older persons were able to participate fully. Timely action would transform the risks associated with the growing elderly population into opportunities.

8. **Mr. Akgun** (Turkey), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Turkish youth attached great importance to the World Programme of Action for Youth, which allowed them to speak out on matters such as unemployment. Although unemployment had fallen in Turkey in recent years and youth unemployment was being addressed, more remained to be done. Since the best way of tackling unemployment was through education, he was pleased to report that higher education fees had been abolished in Turkey and opportunities were increasing by the day.

9. Governments should improve youth representation. The Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sport had been established in 2011 partly to improve youth representation within the administration. To enhance the democratic participation of young people, the Government had reduced the minimum age of electoral candidates from 30 to 25, and a further reduction to 18 was being discussed, showing the Government's willingness to rely on younger people.

10. Turkish young people were committed to human rights and democracy, and supported global action on climate change. Turkish youth associations had organized campaigns to raise awareness of global warming and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

11. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that social development was still a distant goal, despite initiatives over the years. Poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, income inequality, malnutrition and a lack of quality education and health-care services had hampered the international community's efforts. Climate change and developed partners' failure to meet official development assistance commitments had complicated matters for developing countries. His delegation was alarmed by the finding in the report of the Secretary-General on the 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) that, at the current rate of decrease, extreme poverty would not be eradicated for 88 years. Many countries, in particular the least developed countries, would not achieve the MDGs on time.

12. Poverty eradication was a high priority for his Government, which had been following a poverty reduction strategy and had made progress in reducing abject poverty. Programmes providing food for work and allowances for widows and destitute women constituted a safety net. Vulnerable group development and feeding programmes ensured food security among the extremely poor, with support for small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly those run by women, through a dedicated fund and collateral-free loans. An old-age allowance programme covered 2.4 million elderly people.

13. Comprehensive legislation on disabilities was in place and was being harmonized with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A

programme of stipends for students with disabilities had been introduced. Special schools had been set up for visually and hearing impaired students, and free Government schooling was available for autistic children. A quota of persons with disabilities had been set for Government employment. His delegation would table a draft resolution entitled "Addressing the socioeconomic needs of individuals, families and societies affected by autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disorders" at the current General Assembly session. It welcomed the convening of a high-level meeting on disability and development in 2013 and supported the inclusion of disability in the development agenda beyond 2015.

14. The mainstreaming of youth in the overall development process was a priority for his Government, which provided intensive training to develop young people's skills. A national service programme had been introduced, and arrangements had been made to provide micro-credit to encourage trained young people to become self-employed. Preparations had started for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014, which could prove crucial by allowing social ills to be combated through family values.

15. As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report on the World Summit for Social Development (A/67/179), climate change was a major threat to economic growth, agricultural productivity and poverty eradication, particularly in developing countries. In Bangladesh, rising sea levels were forcing people to move from low-lying areas to cities, and development gains were being eroded by natural disasters. Vulnerable countries should be compensated to cope with the effects of climate change.

16. Lastly, development partners should honour their official development assistance commitments, encourage debt relief, keep their promises of financial and technological transfer to respond to climate change, avoid protectionism and facilitate regular migration. Only through concerted effort and partnership would the plight of the world's poor be relieved.

17. **Mr. Desta** (Eritrea) said that the World Summit for Social Development, the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and the MDGs had put people at the centre of the development agenda, but many nations found it difficult to meet such goals

given the global economic downturn. Governments should remain committed to social progress and be given space to develop strategies reflecting national priorities. The aim of his Government's social policy, informed by social justice and cohesion, was to promote equal rights and equitable sharing of resources.

18. In line with United Nations resolutions, Eritrea's youth had been given the responsibility of being agents of change after years of war. Their participation had been instrumental in addressing the causes of underdevelopment and had led to more basic social services, particularly in rural areas.

19. His Government and the Eritrean diaspora supported families affected by the war. Free education was provided from primary to tertiary levels. Investment in basic infrastructure and social services had raised living standards. Since 1991, child and maternal mortality had decreased, while life expectancy had markedly increased. The Government had set out a comprehensive development programme, to be supported by mineral exploitation and new investment opportunities. Better coordination was needed at all levels for the socio-economic agenda to move forward.

20. **Mr. Tshekhani** (Georgia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, although international instruments advocated youth inclusion in decision-making processes, implementation had been too slow. Youth participation had been mentioned in only 8 of the 41 action plans submitted to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Review of National Action Plans on Youth Employment. Young people themselves were the best guide to the problems facing them and should be included to promote responsible citizenship and encourage them to become leaders in future.

21. Despite efforts to tackle violence against women and girls, 70 per cent of women had experienced violence and half of sexual assaults were on girls under 16. In some countries, men's rights were thought to prevail over women's. Education was an effective tool against gender stereotypes, which were caused mainly by a lack of information. Member States should therefore develop gender-balanced educational practices which promoted equality.

22. Georgia had 500,000 internally displaced persons, and peace and security was thus an important

issue. War was a major obstacle to development, and children and young people were among the most vulnerable, since they lost access to education, adequate housing and health care and experienced lifelong psychological trauma. He, therefore, urged the international community to unite for peace.

23. **Mr. Vásquez** (Dominican Republic), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, although developing countries had made progress towards the MDGs, obstacles remained in the areas of infectious disease, the environment, clean drinking water, malnutrition, education, economic development, housing, security, employment, empowerment and peace.

24. There was no place for exclusion and vulnerability if the international community hoped to achieve balanced development. Equity and sustainability were essential to sustainable growth. Economic growth alone, however, was not enough to reduce social inequity; also needed was a belief that each person could achieve his or her own goals while helping others to achieve theirs.

25. Development could be achieved through stronger policies on the state of law, with ethical institutions serving responsible societies guaranteeing security and promoting equity, governance, peaceful co-existence and development; equal rights and opportunities, with universal education, health and basic services, and the reduction of poverty and social inequality; integrated, innovative, diverse, quality-oriented and environmentally sustainable economies which generated growth with equity and decent work; sustainable production and consumption; equitable risk management; environmental protection; and an appropriate response to climate change.

26. Persons with disabilities should be included in the international community's goals since, according to the World Health Organization *World report on disability*, a billion people lived with disabilities and that number was increasing. Lastly, he stressed that achieving the MDGs required the political will of Governments, in particular those of developing countries, to strengthen governance and the defence of human rights.

27. **Mr. Seghairon Elsheikh** (Sudan) said that the global financial crisis, fluctuations in food prices, rises in energy costs and climate change were putting social development at risk and impeding fulfilment of the commitments made in Copenhagen. In his country,

peace was a prerequisite for social development. His Government had just signed a number of cooperation accords with South Sudan and established a transitional authority in the Darfur region. Negotiations in Addis Ababa over the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states were expected to bear fruit shortly.

28. His country had enacted a comprehensive anti-poverty programme that focused on creating jobs, expanding education, eradicating illiteracy, providing medical care, supplying potable water, protecting the environment and ensuring food security. The Diwan al-Zakat social care agency, alongside the Department of Waqfs and civil society organizations, was strengthening social insurance by supporting sanitation projects, religious education and higher education and had become a powerful tool for eradicating poverty and achieving social justice.

29. The Sudan had established a National Council for Persons with Disabilities and laid out a five-year plan for persons with disabilities for the period 2012-2016 that stressed health, education, awareness-raising, economic empowerment and social, cultural and political inclusion. Despite economic difficulties, the Government had set aside close to \$2 million for programmes for persons with disabilities and was also cooperating closely with civil society organizations. Donor countries should fulfil their assistance commitments and act to cancel the debts of developing countries.

30. **Mr. Alruwaily** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government had instituted a number of training programmes for improving family communication. It had established homes for the elderly and had launched numerous programmes for persons with disabilities that expanded health care, improved accessibility, and offered discounts on public transportation and Government fees.

31. Young people in Saudi Arabia were being granted greater involvement in decision-making processes. There had been a number of forums for dialogue between Saudi youths and young people from other countries. In 2006, a programme had been established that had sent tens of thousands of students abroad. Saudi Arabia was establishing universities at a record rate and had instituted several cultural and humanitarian prizes that were awarded to researchers and academicians around the world. His Government was doing everything that it could to allow young

people to develop their skills and broaden their horizons.

32. **Ms. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan) said that her delegation encouraged the implementation of international decisions to mitigate the effects of the economic downturn, while supporting the Member States' commitment to addressing the challenges facing vulnerable populations. It endorsed the report of the Secretary-General on the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (A/67/179) and encouraged the strengthening of national efforts to achieve social development goals beyond 2015.

33. Calling for a multilateral trading system supporting sustainable development, her country advocated more focused trade measures to achieve the MDGs. Stakeholders should be more involved in negotiations to find ways of increasing exports and access to global markets. Developing and transition-economy countries should be better integrated into international trade. Social commitments should not be reduced in the fight against poverty, unemployment and hunger or in efforts to improve education, health and social integration.

34. Her Government had overcome the crisis in those difficult times and was on the path to social development. An inclusive social policy had been launched in 2011, embracing new employment approaches, modernizing housing and public utilities, and providing clean drinking water. A national fund to stabilize the economy had been established to reduce dependence on external factors and build resilience.

35. The Government was addressing increases in unemployment, underemployment and hazardous work. It had created jobs and improved infrastructure through an anti-crisis road map. Working together with non-government stakeholders and the business community, it was giving grants to unemployed people so that they could acquire professional skills. The road map focused on the creation of social jobs and had reduced Kazakhstan's unemployment rate to a level much lower than the global average.

36. Her Government was ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In accordance with the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2009-2012, a national action plan for persons with disabilities was being set up, with the aim of creating free access to basic services so that those persons could be integrated into society by 2018.

37. The Government, unlike others, had increased health spending in 2012. A unified health-care system would be introduced by 2013. Health surveillance programmes were being implemented, targeting children, adolescents, women and the rural population. As a result, life expectancy was expected to rise to 70 by 2015. Kazakhstan was committed to meeting its social obligations in order to raise incomes. It would ensure stable employment, strengthen capacity-building and improve targeted assistance.

38. Lastly, her country would contribute to efforts to improve the cohesion of the United Nations system and foster closer partnerships with Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia. It favoured a long-term equity-oriented approach taking vulnerable groups into consideration.

39. **Mr. Pham Vinh Quang** (Viet Nam) said that the global recovery was under threat from the economic, social and energy crises, food insecurity and climate change. Developing countries faced difficulties in achieving sustainable development, inclusive growth and international development goals. His delegation was concerned by the finding in the Secretary-General's report on outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (A/67/179) that it would take 88 years to eradicate extreme poverty at the rate of decline observed between 1990 and 2005. Urgent action was needed to deal with unemployment and social inequality and to ensure sustainable social protection.

40. His Government's stabilization measures had improved the economic situation, with healthy growth in 2011 and the first six months of 2012. It had achieved many MDGs early and was committed to social justice and the mainstreaming of human rights into national policy. Its guiding principle was harmonious economic and cultural development, and the achievement of progress and social justice.

41. The Act on persons with disabilities had come into force in 2011, demonstrating his Government's commitment to those persons. The 2012-2020 Project on Assistance for Persons with Disabilities was designed to implement the Act and provide health services, vocational training and jobs to those persons. The 2012-2020 National Action Plan for Elderly People was awaiting approval. Its aim was to protect older people's socio-economic life and allow them to participate in society. Lastly, the 2011-2020 Youth Development Strategy had been adopted to develop a

qualified workforce for the modernization of Viet Nam. It would create 600,000 jobs for young people annually and reduce youth unemployment.

42. **Mr. Kasymov** (Kyrgyzstan) said that poverty and unemployment were the most pressing issues now facing the international community. The economic crisis, coupled with high food prices, affected countries' ability to maintain previous levels of social protection. International financial institutions should therefore consider eliminating the conditions that affected the social programmes of countries receiving technical and financial assistance.

43. The Rio+20 outcome document, entitled *The Future We Want*, referred to the importance of development in mountainous regions and the need to promote sustainable development in developing countries with mountainous regions. Such countries faced high levels of poverty and isolation, as well as elevated transport costs and external debt, making achievement of the MDGs difficult. Donor countries and United Nations bodies were urged to provide as much assistance as possible to those countries.

44. Youth employment was a priority for his Government, which was taking significant measures to address the issue. A global youth employment strategy based on International Labour Organization outcomes was a necessity.

45. Kyrgyzstan had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011 and was now completing ratification procedures. The 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, set for September 2013, would draw the attention of the international community to the situation of persons with disabilities and lead to the formulation of strategic approaches and a plan of action for ensuring development that was inclusive of persons with disabilities.

46. Urgent measures were needed to accelerate implementation of the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and to foster an expansion of rights and opportunities for the elderly. Social support had been reduced in many countries, owing to the economic crisis. That trend must be reversed in order to address the problem of poverty among the elderly.

47. Labour migration was also a priority for Kyrgyzstan. Many studies had indicated that remittances from migrants were spent primarily on food, housing, medical care and education, which were all aspects of social development. Accordingly, countries of origin and destination must step up their efforts to expand foreign workers' economic potential by creating favourable legal, regulatory and institutional conditions.

48. **Mr. Advani** (India) said that, despite the progress on poverty eradication, full employment, decent work and social integration since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, many challenges remained. The grim economic situation had reduced developing countries' capacity to cope with global shocks. Inclusive growth therefore needed to be stimulated, demand boosted and jobs created. At the Rio+20 Conference, the international community had renewed its commitment to sustainable development, recognizing poverty as the greatest challenge. Poverty eradication should thus be prioritized in the development agenda beyond 2015 and every effort should be made to achieve the MDGs.

49. Corruption should be tackled and Government transparency ensured. The generation of unaccounted wealth also limited growth and investment. The United Nations Convention against Corruption should be ratified by all, and stolen assets should be recovered through international cooperation. At the June 2012 Summit of the Group of Twenty in Los Cabos, Mexico, leaders had made the closing of the enforcement gap a priority and resolved to pursue those who received bribes as well as those who paid them. To complement domestic resource mobilization, developed countries should meet their official development assistance commitments.

50. His Government was focusing on inclusive growth, with emphasis on rural development, women, and vulnerable groups. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme ensured 100 days of work, half of which was reserved for women, to 53 million poor households. Full primary school enrolment had nearly been attained, with narrower gender gaps in middle and higher education. Life expectancy and the child immunization rate had risen, while infant and maternal mortality had decreased.

51. India had a comprehensive legal framework to assist persons with disabilities. His Government tried

to give those people equal opportunities, protect their rights and allow them to participate fully in society. Lastly, it believed that older people could contribute to their communities and had enacted legislation to ensure that they could live with dignity.

52. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) said that her Government had put in place policies for young people, the elderly and persons with disabilities, with a view to reducing inequality and improving the living conditions of those groups. In the field of health, young people were given skills to reduce their vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Screening was carried out, anti-retroviral drugs were provided free, children born with the virus were given medical care, peer educators were trained, and counselling was organized.

53. Health structures were encouraged to provide support and guidance and to reduce the death rate among the poor and child and maternal mortality. Free vaccines were provided to children under one. A reproductive health programme had been developed to protect families and young people. Her Government was encouraging research to meet changing health needs, such as those of the ageing population.

54. Cameroon had established the Youth Integration Fund to encourage youth employment as well as programmes to assist young members of the diaspora returning to Cameroon, integrate youth from poor areas, create jobs for persons with disabilities and help vulnerable families and the elderly. Young people were given loans on preferential terms, elderly people were employed for longer periods and given social security cards, and jobs had been created for persons with disabilities.

55. Education accounted for 16.8 per cent of the national budget, close to the 20 per cent recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Primary education was provided free so that all children could complete it. Professional training was encouraged and new courses were being designed to meet Cameroon's needs. Persons with disabilities received various types of assistance, such as ground-floor university accommodation and training grants.

56. Since social development was expensive for developing countries, her delegation welcomed the increasing discussion of it at the United Nations. By 2017, Cameroon's social protection system would be

modernized. Access to health and education services for vulnerable populations would be improved, social housing would be built, and drinking water and electricity supplies would be strengthened. Lastly, her delegation thanked the Organization for its support through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2013-2017 and asked her Government's partners to back its development efforts.

57. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that the global economic crisis continued to undermine progress towards the MDGs. It was important to ensure that decreases in public spending did not negatively impact the most vulnerable. His country had managed to avoid fallout from the crisis and had seen dramatic improvements in its economy owing to one of the fastest economic growth rates in the world.

58. Azerbaijan had instituted a number of programmes to translate economic growth into social development, in line with the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (A/67/179). Its poverty reduction and sustainable development programme provided for equal access to all services, particularly education and health care, and included provisions to protect the most vulnerable, including the elderly, low-income families, refugees and internally displaced persons.

59. **Mr. Abdullayev** (Azerbaijan), speaking as a youth delegate, said that 133 million young people in the world were illiterate, and young people comprised 41 per cent of the world's unemployed. Education had the power to break the cycle of poverty. His Government had invested heavily in education, including the funding of several thousand scholarships for Azerbaijani students to study abroad. It had also made a point of involving young people in the formulation of its youth programme for the period 2011-2015, which focused on providing job opportunities and paid particular attention to the needs of internally displaced and refugee youth.

60. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that 17 years after the Copenhagen Social Summit, poverty eradication, full employment and social integration remained elusive. He welcomed the 2013 High-level Meeting on Disability and Development and commended the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing. The upcoming twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 was also an excellent time to consider policies oriented towards the family. His

delegation supported the adoption by the General Assembly of the outcome document of the 2011 High-level Meeting on Youth, which identified 17 areas for addressing the most pressing concerns of young people.

61. Africa was in need of international assistance to counteract the negative economic effects of high food prices, unemployment and pandemics. His Government had adopted a number of structural reforms intended to promote economic development, social cohesion and equitable distribution of national income. It had made substantial investments in human development that had raised the gross domestic product per capita, and had also allocated large social transfers to support families, retirees and poor persons. Education and health care had been expanded and improved, and special attention was being devoted to social protection for the elderly, persons with disabilities, orphans, young people at moral risk and the needy.

62. **Ms. Tomova** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the members of the General Assembly needed to bridge their differences over how to address the problems facing youth in terms of education, work, health and social integration. In her country, polls showed that a majority of young people were interested in starting their own businesses, and a number of workshops had been organized to assist them with that ambition. Less burdensome bureaucratic procedures and preferential financing, together with training and dissemination of information, would help to promote entrepreneurship among youth.

63. **Mr. Dimitrov** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that unemployed and uninvolved young people were more vulnerable to feelings of insecurity and apathy. Activities such as youth-run media gave young people a greater sense of purpose and community involvement. Governments should allocate resources to promote youth employment and participation. He urged countries that had not already done so to institute the practice of sending youth delegates to the United Nations and stressed the leading role of young people as agents of change promoting development, tolerance and peace.

64. **Mr. Grima** (Malta) said that his Government's National Youth Policy recognized the importance of integrating young people smoothly into the labour market. Its Employment and Training Corporation, with the help of the European Social Fund, offered a



wide range of services that included lifelong learning opportunities and career counselling.

65. There was a worldwide shortage of personnel trained to address the needs of the rapidly growing elderly population. Malta was proud to be the host country for the United Nations International Institute on Ageing, which assisted developing countries in capacity building to address ageing-related problems. His Government was planning a wide range of policies and programmes to respond to the needs of older persons and promote their social integration.

66. A ministerial post with direct responsibility for the country's older persons had been established in 1987, and a National Council of Older Persons had been set up in 1992. Malta was committed to a general policy of social inclusion as well as to maintaining existing levels of services despite the international economic crisis.

67. **Ms. Hady** (Yemen) said that her Government had been funding small enterprises and giving priority to labour-intensive investments for almost two decades. It had engaged the private sector and civil society organizations in poverty alleviation and expanded the social safety net. A Ministry of Youth and Sports had been established, and a national strategy for childhood and youth for the period 2006-2015 had been adopted. Despite the price increases, unemployment and poverty brought about by recent political upheavals, her country remained committed to implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

68. **Ms. Radelicki** (Belgium), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, despite the seemingly constant stream of global crises, young persons were eager to take part in building a sustainable and just future. She drew attention to the fact that more than one out of every seven people on earth did not have access to potable water. Poverty and lack of access to water were mutually reinforcing. The international community needed to take action to break that vicious circle and should treat access to potable water as a prerequisite for achievement of the MDGs.

69. **Mr. Moscovic** (Belgium), speaking as a youth delegate, said that it was unacceptable that, in the twenty-first century, 4000 children died each day owing to lack of potable water. He called on the United Nations to ensure exercise of the right to safe and clean

drinking water and sanitation, which had been recognized under General Assembly 64/292 as a human right that was essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.

70. **Ms. Wilson** (Jamaica) said that the Decent Work Agenda was critical to her Government's poverty eradication programme. It remained committed to the core labour standards contained in International Labour Organization conventions. The other issues on the social agenda were also a high priority for Jamaica, including ensuring social inclusion and integration, access to education, food security, health care and the post-2015 development framework.

71. **Ms. Francis** (Jamaica), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her country had a long history of providing opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making, including the establishment of its National Youth Council, National Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassadors Programme. However, for many Jamaican young people, especially in rural areas, making use of such opportunities was not a realistic possibility, largely because many of them lacked access to non-traditional forms of education, including the Internet, which might provide them with the relevant information. Unless young people were equipped with the tools that they needed to address social, political and economic challenges, the next generation would be unprepared to face them.

72. **Ms. Hassan** (Djibouti) said that, closely following the Rio+20 Conference, the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly was an opportunity for Member States to renew their commitment to sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental aspects. Poverty eradication remained an acute challenge in the Horn of Africa, where some of the most severe effects of climate change were being felt, including both drought and flooding. Her Government had put in place social policies intended to alleviate the poverty and hunger that often went with it and had undertaken a number of measures to ensure food security, including joint agriculture and water projects with its neighbours Ethiopia and the Sudan. Providing access to safe drinking water and sanitation continued to be an essential objective for her country.

73. Women, children and youth should be a focus of any discussions of the post-2015 development agenda. In 2008, her Government had established the Djibouti Social Development Agency, which promoted young

people's welfare and gender equality. She noted the African Union initiative calling for a General Assembly resolution on stepping up efforts to end female genital mutilation. The African Group would submit a draft resolution on the issue to the Committee at the current session.

74. Approximately two thirds of the population of Africa was under 35 years of age. Her Government had instituted social policies and programmes to respond to the needs of youth in the areas of education, health and employment. Accordingly, her country encouraged its development partners to increase their support in the fight against poverty, hunger and malnutrition and to meet their official development assistance commitments. Lastly, Djibouti had just ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in June 2012 and looked forward to the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development scheduled for the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

75. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador) said that, according to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/2012/51), ageing was one of the most important demographic changes of the century. The number of older persons worldwide was expected to double by 2050, with a higher than average proportion in Latin America and the Caribbean.

76. At the international level, there were many instruments on ageing, and his Government believed in active participation in the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on Ageing. At regional level, the San José Charter on the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean had been adopted in May 2012, and the 2007 Brasilia Declaration contained a commitment to promote a United Nations convention on the rights of older persons.

77. The international framework, however, did not guarantee the same rights for all. Its shortcomings should be addressed without delay so that older persons' rights would be respected and they could continue benefiting from development. His delegation reiterated its concern over the unfocused nature of international measures to protect older people's rights, which made it difficult to uphold them at the national level. Additional steps were required, therefore, to protect their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

78. Discrimination against older persons made their social integration difficult. Participation was essential to older persons' empowerment and should be part of development and poverty reduction strategies. Discrimination against older women was another aspect of the problem. The feminization of old age should be taken into account when strategies were revised, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) should be involved in addressing the issue.

79. Common efforts were needed to respond to specific requirements and to the gaps in implementation. His Government was ready to discuss the various complementary proposals constructively. In that regard, it favoured discussions with United Nations specialized agencies, dialogue with the treaty bodies, direct participation by national human rights bodies and the inclusion of older persons' views at future high-level meetings of the General Assembly. Lastly, he pointed out that his Government had submitted for the Committee's consideration a draft resolution on a comprehensive international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons.

80. **Mr. Fiallo** (Ecuador) said that, in the struggle to reduce poverty, inequity should be reduced. Goals should not be based on market consumption but should take into consideration the full enjoyment of life with dignity. That would lead to better social welfare and the end of economic and social inequality.

81. To that end, his Government had turned to collective action and the public sector to guarantee justice, economic, social and cultural rights, employment, recreation and artistic creation. Unprecedented health and education investments had been made to eliminate the intergenerational poverty trap and to achieve the goal of "living well" Ecuador was concerned, however, that social affairs were not of central importance for the international community, as evidenced by the lack of progress on the MDGs, the failure to meet the commitments made at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, and the persistence of the traditional financial doctrine under which social investment was seen as an expense.

82. His country, in contrast, had tripled social investment in the preceding four years and had also improved investment quality by valuing human beings above capital. Poverty had been reduced through

health, education and housing programmes. The Economic and Social Council resolution entitled “Indigenous women: key actors in poverty and hunger eradication” (E/CN.6/2012/L.6) should be implemented in all States Members as a weapon in the struggle against poverty and hunger. His Government had developed inclusive policies for women's empowerment and would continue working for even better results.

83. Ecuador's policy was to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the Constitution and international instruments. As a first step, it had identified those persons and ensured that care was available for them throughout the country, resulting in their social inclusion. Much remained to be done, however. Social development was impossible if the rights of persons with disabilities were ignored. His Government was convinced, therefore, that the 2013 High-level Meeting on Disability and Development would benefit persons with disabilities and society as a whole.

84. **Mr. Kebret** (Ethiopia) said that his country's five-year Growth and Transformation Programme had been so successful that Ethiopia was one of the four least developed countries cited in the Secretary-General's report on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (A/67/179) as having significantly reduced levels of extreme poverty. His country was on the right track to meet its goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015.

85. Ethiopia had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and established committees to coordinate and monitor implementation of the Convention. It had criminalized discrimination against persons with disabilities, provided tax exemptions for employers who recruited 60 per cent or more of their workforce from among persons with disabilities, and had enacted a building code that required disabled access to all public buildings. Under the Growth and Transformation Programme, the Government had begun to provide prosthetic devices and rehabilitative services to over 200,000 persons with disabilities.

86. Ethiopia's 2004 National Youth Policy and 2006 Youth Development Package were in line with both the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and the African Youth Charter. The number of students in primary school and in technical

and vocational education and training had increased. As the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Youth had noted, youth volunteers had been participating in efforts to combat desertification, and volunteerism had been mainstreamed into national poverty reduction strategies.

87. A National Plan of Action for Older Persons based on the 2000 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing had been in place since 2006. The Government had also been enhancing the capacity of older persons associations by providing training courses and financial aid and establishing income generating centres and projects.

88. **Ms. Rajasingham** (Sri Lanka), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the concerns of young people in her country included finding work, putting three decades of conflict behind them, getting a good education, fighting sexual-harassment and combating drug addiction. Young people needed more platforms through which to solve their problems, voice their concerns and realize their dreams.

89. **Ms. Wickramanayake** (Sri Lanka), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her country's Youth Parliament was an important platform for young people. Its members were drawn from both genders and all ethnic and social groups, and interacted regularly with members of the national Parliament. Sri Lanka's 9000 youth clubs and its award programme for emerging young leaders also helped to mobilize youth potential.

90. There was a reality show for young persons with disabilities, and, starting in 2013, the national sports day would include events for persons with disabilities. Sri Lankan young people would continue to work with the Government to further the participation of youth in the post-2015 development agenda. She looked forward to the World Youth Conference to be held in her country's capital in 2014.

91. **Mr. Cassidy** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that economic growth could be achieved without sacrificing social equity. The global economic crisis had opened a window of opportunity for new policy approaches that focused not merely on job creation but on the quality of the jobs themselves. Such approaches might include various mixes of infrastructure investment, wage and social protection policies, and rural development initiatives, but in all

cases, respect for core labour standards and labour rights was central.

92. Research had shown that boosting domestic sources of growth was more effective than exchange rate changes on their own in sustaining employment and reducing global imbalances. Recent events in the Middle East and North Africa and demonstrated how unemployment and income inequality could contribute to social unrest. At its 101st session in June 2012, the International Labour Conference had adopted Recommendation No. 202 concerning national floors of social protection, which affirmed that social security was both a human right and an economic necessity.

93. In response to the crisis of youth unemployment, ILO had organized numerous national and regional consultations with young people and had convened a Youth Employment Forum in Geneva that had brought together young people, government representatives, workers and employers. Following the Forum, International Labour Conference had called for targeted and immediate action to tackle the youth unemployment crisis.

94. The ILO Global Plan of Action for achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labour by 2016 guided work in helping society's most vulnerable. A recent report, however, pointed to a slow down in the global pace of the reduction of child labour and expressed concern that the world economic crisis could further retard efforts in that regard.

95. Figures showed that nearly 21 million people around the world were victims of forced labour, trapped in jobs which they were coerced or deceived into. In a positive development, the 101st International Labour Conference had lifted restrictions on Myanmar after the its Government and ILO had agreed on a joint strategy for eliminating forced labour. While the global crisis was causing economic stagnation in some places, it also offered opportunities for the international community to rebalance the global economy and advance the cause of global social justice.

*The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m*