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Chair: Mr. Tafrov..... (Bulgaria)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/68/174 and A/68/215)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/68/61-E/2013/3, A/168/95, A/68/168 and A/68/169)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/68/167)

(d) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (*continued*) (A/68/201)

1. **Mr. de Azeredo** (Brazil) said that, with one of the largest populations of young persons in the world, his country took a particular interest in youth issues. It considered youth participation in decision-making fundamental and had promoted the establishment of various participation mechanisms within the United Nations and regional forums. Acutely aware of the demographic challenges posed by its growing population of older persons, Brazil valued the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Political Declaration adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing, in spite of their non-binding nature. It had hosted the Second Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing in Latin America and the Caribbean, whose Brasilia Declaration requested the appointment of a special rapporteur responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons and committed the participating Governments to consultations on drafting a United Nations convention.

2. He urged ratification of the recently adopted Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, Brazil was adjusting its laws and policies to comply with it. To encourage Members States to establish policies promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities, he suggested exploring the post-2015 development strategy along the lines of the

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Brazil was honoured to have contributed to the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Disability and Development by hosting the Regional Consultation of the Americas on Disability and Development in May 2013.

3. Brazil had made unprecedented strides towards poverty reduction as a result of consistent public policies that combined sustained economic growth with social inclusion. One notable outgrowth was its family allowance programme, which provided monthly payments to poor families who agreed to keep their children in school and take them for regular health checks. Brazil was honoured to host the upcoming third Global Conference on Child Labour.

4. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that, despite some progress towards the social development goals, extreme poverty and illiteracy were far from being eradicated. One per cent of the global population owned nearly half of global wealth, while the poorest half owned less than 1 per cent. Such inequality begat social unrest and threatened to undermine existing achievements.

5. Bangladesh had managed to make sustainable progress towards social development by adopting a development model emphasizing the empowerment of all social groups. To promote the empowerment of women, it provided innovative maternal health care services, vocational education and collateral-free credit for women entrepreneurs. Girls received stipends and were exempted from tuition through secondary school. To empower the disabled, it provided free physiotherapy services as well as hearing care, vision testing, training and appropriate equipment for persons with disabilities in remote areas. A number of specialized schools had been established for disabled children, who received monthly stipends to attend. In the context of the Global Autism Public Health Initiative in Bangladesh, launched in 2011, it was also working to address autism, thus far in large part by combating the associated social stigma.

6. Recognizing education as a basic component of development, Bangladesh had taken steps to ensure education for all by establishing an education assistance trust for underprivileged students and providing free textbooks. It had improved the quality of education by incorporating climate change and reproductive health into the curriculum and by providing e-books and

information and communications technology (ICT). To bring young people into the development process, it offered extensive training in various sectors and had introduced a national service programme. It had also instituted skill enhancement training to improve their access to domestic and overseas labour markets and had made arrangements to make microcredit available to youth on easy terms.

7. With respect to the post-2015 development agenda, the first priority should be formulating specific initiatives to assist specific vulnerable populations. Secondly, the agenda should emphasize investing not only in access to education but also in quality, by stressing infrastructure development and ICT-based education and training. Thirdly, a turnaround in the decline in aid to developing countries was imperative. Lastly, climatically vulnerable developing countries should be compensated to enable them to cope with the impact of climate change. Achieving “the future we want” would require political will, action on the ground and solid and sustained global partnership.

8. **Ms. Al-Derham** (Qatar) said that the post-2015 development agenda should give priority to the social integration of disadvantaged and vulnerable people, who should be major players in social development. Reflecting a commitment to social development for all, the Qatar National Vision 2030 envisaged a country with the capacity for sustainable development, providing decent livelihoods for its citizens and building institutions and civil society. Its national development strategy 2011-2016 put human, economic and social development at its centre.

9. As the natural nucleus of society, the family was integral to social development efforts in Qatar and around the world. On the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014, her delegation wished to stress the importance of including the family in future resolutions and efforts. Qatar had enacted a law specifically targeting persons with disabilities. It also provided decent job opportunities for all segments of society through projects and programmes giving priority to older persons, persons with disabilities and youth. It was active in promoting universal access to education both nationally and internationally. As a result of its efforts, Qatar ranked first in the Arab world on the human development index of the United Nations Development Programme and thirty-sixth in the world. It remained

committed to achieving sustainable development at home and around the world.

10. **Ms. Kanjananon** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, strongly urged Member States to make the elimination of gender inequality and the empowerment of women and girls cross-cutting goals of the post-2015 agenda. Thailand was working hard to eliminate gender disparities through such measures as the establishment of the National Development Fund for Women, which provided low-interest loans for women in order to generate employment and income. Internationally, it was actively promoting the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders, known as the Bangkok Rules, and had produced a documentary film on that subject which would be screened as a General Assembly side event on 17 October. The educational marginalization of girls and the poor was still a predominant phenomenon in developing countries.

11. **Ms. Tipkanjanarat** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that while all children in Thailand were entitled to receive 12 years of basic education, in practice they did not, owing to a lack of resources and qualified teachers, especially in remote areas. To improve the quality of education, her Government had launched Teach for Thailand, a programme that placed Thai university students in schools around Bangkok. Young people were both the reason and the means for development, and she and her fellow youth delegate pledged their commitment to promote social inclusion with the active participation of young people.

12. **Mr. Al-Matraf** (Saudi Arabia) said that his country was striving to achieve sustainable and balanced social development. In 2012, Saudi Arabia had achieved near 100 per cent school enrolment and literacy among young people, and it continued to work to improve the quality and goals of public education. It had met the MDGs for immunization and child mortality in 2011, and the 16 per cent increase in its 2013 health care budget was allocated primarily to improving maternal and child health care. In the area of employment, a number of government and civil society programmes and initiatives had been launched to create decent jobs for both sexes and increase labour productivity.

13. To meet its commitments under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its

Optional Protocol, his country had established rehabilitation centres and centres for the prevention and early detection of disability, in addition to providing financial support for disabled persons. Mechanisms were in place to enforce respect for the rights of disabled persons. In addition to participating in the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development, it had organized a high-level side event to generate dialogue on the implementation of the MDGs with respect to women with disabilities.

14. Over the preceding 30 years, Saudi Arabia had provided social development assistance to more than 95 developing countries, as well as soft loans for social- and economic-sector projects in more than 80 developing countries. It contributed generously to the World Food Programme. His Government urged developed countries to provide more support to developing countries for social development, bearing in mind that to be successful, development programmes and policies must take into account the basic needs of each country, engage its people in the formulation process and employ best practices.

15. **Ms. Ulziibayar** (Mongolia) said that the post-2015 development agenda should include social issues and social protection and should emphasize the empowerment of people, a key driver of social development. Mongolia had already met the MDGs for primary education, under-5 mortality and maternal health and was working closely with all national stakeholders to halve extreme poverty, provide housing and ensure environmental sustainability.

16. She reaffirmed Mongolia's commitment to the follow-up to the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development, noting that Mongolia had around 60 legal instruments and 50 national policy documents addressing the needs of persons with disabilities, complemented by regional initiatives such as the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and the Incheon Strategy. Her delegation reaffirmed its belief in the importance of literacy and would be submitting a draft resolution placing literacy at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda. It applauded the 2012 International Year of Cooperatives, which had increased global awareness of their importance. In conjunction with its celebration, Mongolia had launched a three-year campaign to promote rural cooperatives, which were crucial in rural and agricultural areas. Her delegation urged the Committee to endorse the proposed international plan of action on

cooperatives in development beyond 2012 and would be tabling a draft resolution on cooperatives in social development.

17. **Mr. Cabactulan** (Philippines), referring to the ongoing discussions on a post-2015 development agenda, said that his delegation appreciated the importance attached to an inclusive, people-centred approach, which had been demonstrated most recently at the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development and the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. His Government strongly supported measures to empower, integrate and increase the participation of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and its development plan for 2011-2016 envisioned inclusive growth. However, to be truly effective, national efforts must be complemented by regional and international cooperation. In that connection, it was important for developed countries to ensure that their policies supported, or at least did not undermine, socially, economically and environmentally sustainable policies in developing countries, as well as for development partners to explore ways to better leverage official development assistance and scale up existing mechanisms in order to support efforts to achieve the MDGs.

18. To accelerate progress towards implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and other social development goals and to ensure that recovery from the global crises was sustainable, it would be necessary to re-examine and broaden the scope of the global partnership for development. Furthermore, his delegation agreed with the *Report on the World Social Situation 2013 (A/68/215)* that the international trade agenda must support measures targeted towards equalizing opportunities for participation in global markets and that trade agreements should be harmonized with other multilateral agreements in social development so as to form a more cohesive, integrated approach. It supported the outcome documents (A/68/L.1 and L.5) of the above-mentioned recent High-level meetings and hoped that the momentum gained would ensure that no vulnerable group was left behind in the post-2015 development framework.

19. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that the three pillars of social development — poverty eradication, full employment and social integration — remained elusive goals and were rightly at the heart of discussions on a post-2015 development programme.

The situation of the disabled was particularly difficult. He welcomed the outcome document of the recent High-level Meeting on Disability and Development reaffirming the commitment of Member States to achieve the development goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond.

20. His delegation stressed the need to give absolute priority to the protection of older persons and commended the action by the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing to protect their human rights. The twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 presented an excellent opportunity to strengthen family-oriented policies and programmes. He applauded the Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda objective of according higher priority to young people in existing programmes, as well as the appointment of an Envoy on Youth and the establishment of the United Nations Youth Volunteers Programme.

21. In Africa, high food prices, unemployment and pandemics continued to threaten hard-won progress. His Government had implemented a number of economic and social policies intended to promote economic development, social cohesion and equitable distribution of national income, while giving special attention to vulnerable groups. It had made substantial investments in social development that had significantly raised the gross domestic product per capita, halved the poverty rate and cut unemployment. Education and health care had been expanded and improved, and special attention was being devoted to social safety nets for the elderly, persons with disabilities, orphans, young people at moral risk and the needy.

22. **Ms. Alsaleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her Government had demonstrated its commitment to implementing the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly through wide-ranging changes and improvements in the country's social and economic development policies. Despite the ongoing challenges, it had established a national social assistance fund and a national programme to improve economic opportunities for women and was adopting measures to protect families, children, mothers and persons with disabilities as well as to help youth. It was cooperating with international organizations by offering technical and logistical support for aid services and would be evaluating the situation of

children in refugee camps with the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other organizations.

23. Unfortunately, illegal unilateral trade and financial sanctions were hindering Syrian social development and violating the right of Syrians to health services and medicines. The price of fuel and other natural resources had skyrocketed, swelling the public debt, interfering with public transport and driving up unemployment; yet the crisis continued, thanks to those who were impeding dialogue among Syrians.

24. Although otherwise commendable, the Secretary-General's reports on social development ignored not only the catastrophic effects of foreign occupation and unilateral measures but also the disabilities caused by bombardments and mines. In view of the negative impact of the foregoing concerns on social development and human rights, she once again called upon the Secretary-General to include them in his reports.

25. **Mr. Naets** (Belgium), speaking as a youth delegate, said that it was essential for young people to have access to high-level political meetings and decision-making forums and welcomed the Secretary-General's focus on working with and for young people, as well as the recent appointment of an Envoy on Youth. He strongly supported the establishment of an effective forum on youth that would be authorized to monitor and report to the General Assembly on progress in the World Programme of Action for Youth and youth development.

26. **Ms. Raport** (Belgium), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people faced many global concerns that required a global response, and they were counting on the United Nations, which many of them still considered a beacon of hope. The living conditions of future generations must not be compromised by short-sightedness or a lack of political will, and young people had a right to be represented when decisions affecting their future were made. On their return to Belgium, the youth delegates hoped to be able to report positively to their peers on how the United Nations was responding to the challenges before it.

27. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that the many global crises had revealed the fragile nature of progress towards development. The discussions on the post-2015 development agenda provided the best framework

for developing a more robust approach, which should emphasize the reduction of poverty and unemployment with a view to ensuring sustainable, comprehensive, equal and equitable development.

28. Since the 2011 revolution, Tunisia had undertaken a transition to democracy. Her Government had instituted numerous reforms aimed at recognizing political development and building institutions based on pluralism, freedom and political participation by all. It had also taken steps to decentralize decision-making, eliminate arbitrary practices based on loyalty and affiliation and consolidate the principles of good governance, transparency, accountability and equitable distribution of wealth. However, the transition to democracy was complicated by immense expectations for youth employment, regional development, better living conditions and social justice.

29. Restoring the human dimension of development was the collective responsibility of all international actors. Her country was counting on the international community to support not only Tunisia's efforts but also those of all other countries in transition. As the events in her region had demonstrated, investing in economic growth alone could not overcome all of the obstacles to social development, which included poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and the absence of political and civil rights.

30. **Mr. Mladenov** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that education should not be reduced to economics but should be seen as a vehicle for teaching young people life skills that would help them become responsible members of society. A life skills curriculum also provided an excellent context for improving access to gender-sensitive comprehensive sexuality education, which had a positive impact on sexual decisions and reproductive health and helped young people develop positive attitudes and moral values. He urged Governments to establish programmes and policies to ensure open and free access to comprehensive sexual education for all youth.

31. **Ms. Andreeva** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that in a time of poverty, intolerance and high youth unemployment, many young people had lost their sense of belonging to nations or communities and their trust in the effectiveness of Governments. More than ever, education should focus on building social values like humanism, responsibility, honesty and tolerance, in order to create a culture of peace and

strengthen respect for one's compatriots and national institutions, and should promote attitudes based on dialogue, consensus-building and mutual respect.

32. Young people could play key roles as agents of peacebuilding and positive social change. She and her fellow delegate strongly urged the United Nations system and civil society organizations to provide a collaborative framework to engage, empower and educate youth in building peace, solving problems and participating fully in public life. They also urged the United Nations to encourage the promotion of social values in school and by other means, such as social media. They recommended that the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth should be implemented in the light of the Declaration on a Culture of Peace. Lastly, they supported the establishment of a United Nations permanent forum on youth issues to monitor implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the System-wide Action Plan on Youth.

33. **Ms. Velichko** (Belarus) said that her country had achieved Millennium Development Goal 1, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, ahead of schedule. To improve the national standard of living, the State guaranteed a minimum wage and had increased wages and pensions, as well as subsidies for needy families and persons. The small percentage of individuals living below the poverty line received social assistance. A national employment facilitation programme had been instituted to boost workforce competitiveness and improve the use of labour resources.

34. Belarus placed great importance on protecting family values and traditional families, which were key to the development of a healthy and upright society and the preservation of the State and national security. It believed that protecting the interests of traditional families, particularly with respect to reproductive health, should be a priority issue at the upcoming International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014. Young people should be brought up with traditional family values to enable them to assume responsibility for future generations and promote the further development of human civilization.

35. In 2012, Belarus had held its first Family of the Year contest and, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund, it had also hosted an international conference on young families. Protecting

the interests of traditional families, particularly in the area of reproductive health, should be a priority issue at the upcoming special session of the General Assembly on follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014. With respect to population, it was essential to abandon approaches that could worsen the demographic situation in countries with shrinking and rapidly ageing populations. The Belarus national demographic security programme contained measures to stimulate the birth rate and assist multi-child families.

36. A new version of the social services law, in force since January 2013, provided for improved social aid, new social services and additional in-patient facilities, with special arrangements for the disabled, and children with disabilities and their parents. There were live-in facilities for the elderly with many amenities, and war veterans and retired persons received additional social assistance. In November 2013, Belarus would be submitting its periodic report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with which it looked forward to constructive dialogue. Lastly, she stressed that promoting social integration and non-discrimination should be an integral part of tackling the problem of inequality in the post-2015 development agenda.

37. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives) said that it was important to empower vulnerable groups, including youth, who were the building blocks of a healthy future. He welcomed the Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative, the appointment of an Envoy on Youth and the new United Nations Youth Volunteers Programme, which, together with the establishment of youth advisory boards in country offices, should help to address the needs of young people around the world. The Maldives had made substantial investments in the development of its young people and was working hard to cope with a rapidly growing youth population. It looked forward to the 2014 World Youth Conference, where many of the issues surrounding youth would be discussed, as well as to the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

38. Measures to promote family values through family-centred policies would address a number of cross-cutting development challenges. His country supported the establishment of partnerships with civil society organizations to design, implement and evaluate family-oriented policies and programmes. Under the Disability Act of 2010, it had established a

council to protect the rights of disabled persons and a register of persons with disabilities in order to pay them an allowance. The Ministry of Health had completed a disabilities road map in association with the World Health Organization in 2011. It had also initiated policies to allocate social housing for disabled persons and had finalized measures for special access to schooling for children with disabilities.

39. To address the needs of older people, the Maldives provided lifetime pension benefits to all resident Maldives citizens, as well as institutional care. The Ministry of Health was currently working on a five-year strategic plan to improve the overall quality of life of vulnerable groups in the country. In that connection, he recalled the unique challenges faced by small island developing States and once again appealed to the international community to mobilize resources to support vulnerable groups in those countries.

40. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that much remained to be done to realize the ultimate goals of poverty eradication, full productive employment and the social integration of all sectors of society, including vulnerable and marginal groups. The least developed countries and sub-Saharan Africa in general still faced huge challenges in that regard. The global development agenda beyond 2015 should emphasize the social dimension of sustainable development by focusing on the root causes of poverty and addressing inequalities through empowerment and all-inclusive social action programmes.

41. His Government was fully aware of the deep and direct links between social development and social stability and was gearing all policies, including foreign policy, towards socio-economic development. It had extended the old-age pension scheme to people working in the informal economy and the self-employed. In addition to enacting legislation, formulating policies and developing programmes to support and protect disabled people, the Government had established vocational training institutes for them and had set a job quota in the public sector. Pakistan had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010.

42. To harness the capacities of youth, Pakistan had established vocational and technical training programmes and youth microfinance schemes and was promoting public-private partnerships. However, despite the role of government and other stakeholders,

the family remained the bedrock of social development, and it needed to be respected and strengthened across the world. In closing, he expressed appreciation for the ongoing technical and economic partnership of the international community as Pakistan worked to overcome the negative social and economic effects of successive natural disasters.

43. **Mr. Belhaj** (Morocco) said that his delegation wished to reiterate Morocco's firm determination to meet the challenges of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion and carry out the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Social Development. The establishment of an effective social protection system for reducing the vulnerability of poor people was a key part of Government action in the social field. His country had recently implemented incentives to encourage the creation of jobs for vulnerable social groups in partnership with the private sector. The Economic, Social and Environmental Council of Morocco, instituted under the 2011 Constitution, advised, monitored and assisted in matters of national economic and social development policy.

44. Morocco's National Human Development Initiative, launched in 2005 to combat rural poverty and urban social exclusion, had been fine-tuned in 2011 and generously funded for another five years. A health insurance scheme for the poor provided basic medical coverage for nearly a third of the population, and a fund had been created in 2011 to provide support for women lacking a stable income. The Kingdom had taken various steps to help persons with disabilities, including setting a job quota in the public sector, and was encouraging the private sector to set similar quotas. Morocco was also involved in regional rural development and microprojects in Africa.

45. Lastly, his delegation supported the view that individuals should be empowered to contribute actively to national and community economic development and called for increased international and regional cooperation on achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

46. **Mr. Zurabashvili** (Georgia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that he applauded the multiplication of youth-run or youth-specific organizations, youth ministries and agencies and youth policies around the world, as well as the recent efforts to address youth issues and provide youth representation within the United Nations system. Nevertheless, young people continued to lack sufficient access to media, funding

and employment, as well as institutionalized mechanisms of engagement with their Governments and international organizations, including the United Nations. Summarizing the concerns related to him by other young people in Georgia, he said that, despite the priority given to education, youth in some rural areas still lacked access to quality education. There were few opportunities for youth employment in the field of technology, and further national efforts were needed to advance the rights of disabled youth. In addition, young people faced major injustices on a daily basis in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia owing to the foreign military occupation there.

47. Georgia remained a divided nation, and the Russian Federation continued to violate fundamental rights and freedoms in the occupied territories and their vicinity. In protest, Georgian youth had recently organized a series of rallies along the occupation line. On behalf of his country's young people, he called on the United Nations to take steps to end the illegal activities in the occupied Georgian territories and their vicinity and to establish international security and monitoring mechanisms. If injustice was allowed to prevail in Georgia, it would eventually spread to the region or beyond. In that light, he wished to join in condemning the gross human rights violations in the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere.

48. **Mr. Logar** (Slovenia) said that the economic crisis had caused Slovenia to strengthen its efforts to protect the most vulnerable people. As a country with an ageing population, it attached particular importance to protecting the rights of older persons, for which purpose it had enacted a number of laws and developed partnerships between various stakeholders. Civil society organizations were also very active in that area. It supported the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing and welcomed the Human Rights Council's recent appointment of an Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.

49. With respect to youth, he remained convinced that sharing best practices, including in cooperation with the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth and through the Envoy on Youth, would help to address the challenges of providing employment opportunities. The Slovenian Government had adopted a national youth programme to promote and protect the right to employment and other rights of young people. In closing, he expressed pleasure at the enthusiastic contributions of the youth delegates.

50. **Ms. Larsen** (Norway) said that her delegation strongly supported the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development, with its emphasis on achieving the MDGs and including persons with disabilities in the new development agenda. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should be fundamental to the post-2015 development framework, because sustainable development could not be achieved without the meaningful involvement and active participation of persons with disabilities. To address disability properly, better quality data was sorely needed to monitor progress.

51. Efforts must be stepped up to ensure that children with disabilities were not denied their right to an education, and activities targeting women and girls should include those with disabilities. Disabled women and girls were often exposed to double discrimination and were at higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence and other forms of abuse. Norway considered it important to secure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of its international development cooperation. Ensuring the protection of persons with disabilities in humanitarian emergencies was essential.

52. **Ms. Skullerud** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, urged Member States to adopt sustainable solutions for ensuring meaningful youth participation in local, national and international forums, possibly including a permanent forum on youth. She enjoined their commitment to provide access to quality health care for children and young people, with greater emphasis on addressing mental health disorders, which were the leading cause of disability among youth and often the result of human rights violations. In closing, she called on Member States to find long-term solutions to ensure meaningful participation by young people in forums, provide quality health services for children and youth, and act boldly against all violations of human rights, but especially those of children and young persons.

53. **Mr. Marzooq** (Iraq) said that his Government was working hard to establish a social, economic and political environment that gave priority to ensuring peace, stability, respect for human rights, sustainable development and food security, as well as to eradicating poverty and improving the socio-economic situation of all Iraqis. Iraq offered free education to all citizens at all levels and had improved and expanded

its literacy programmes, giving priority to rural and remote areas. It had developed a four-year plan for higher education and scientific research as a first step towards bringing higher education into line with society's needs. Its education strategy called for both vertical and horizontal expansion and had thus far resulted in the construction of 15 new universities.

54. His country provided free health care and, by working to improve health care quality, had been able to reduce child and maternal mortality. Through its social solidarity plan, it provided monthly payments to many vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, widows, older people and women heads of households. In a context of high unemployment, the Government had increased the number of public-sector jobs. New housing had been built, thanks to increased Government allocations and soft loans from the Iraqi housing fund. The national development plan 2010-2014, supplemented by a poverty reduction strategy developed with the support of the World Bank, had already produced results in education, housing and tourism.

55. **Ms. Skljarszka** (Slovakia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Governments were failing youth by providing education that was out of step with their needs. Young people were inflexible — prisoners of their own ideological and social bubbles — because rigid curriculums ignored the importance of teaching respect for different cultural values and traditions. Youth were close-minded because schools emphasized memorization over critical thinking. Youth were exciting, original and creative, but educational systems stunted their potential by rewarding only one mode of intelligence. Youth were unemployed, because schools did not encourage the innovation and flexibility needed to find work in the contemporary job market. She urged her audience and all young people to take active steps to bring about the needed changes in their national education systems.

56. **Ms. AlMuzaini** (Kuwait) said that, convinced of the international community's shared responsibility to help developing countries, her Government had provided grants and loans for social development to more than 100 developing countries throughout the world. It encouraged support for policies and programmes to strengthen families through efficient partnerships, as well as efforts to improve the situation of youth by means of adequately funded national initiatives and youth participation in development

plans and decision-making processes. Kuwait honoured the role of older persons in society and had strengthened and improved its programmes and services for older people.

57. In 2010, Kuwait had enacted a law implementing various provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it had ratified in 2013. The law provided for the integration of social inclusion in development policies and social services. During the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development, her delegation had advocated making the social inclusion of persons with disabilities a priority in the post-2015 development agenda. Overcoming the many obstacles to implementing the recommendations of the Meeting and the many other United Nations meetings and conferences on development would require increased reliance on partnerships.

58. **Mr. Beleffi** (San Marino) said that the post-2015 development model should be based on empowering people. Recalling the clear relationship between disability and poverty and social exclusion, he pointed out that San Marino had been one of the first States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and fully supported the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development. It recognized the importance of older persons in its charter on the rights of the elderly, adopted in 2008, and encouraged them to play an active part in society. His country called for the universal ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. There was a duty to protect children, who were the most vulnerable victims of violence, abuse and exploitation. In the most poverty-stricken areas of the world the infant mortality rate was still unacceptably high. San Marino would unfailingly support the United Nations in its essential role in promoting social development.

59. **Mr. Ntwaagae** (Botswana) said that, while his country had renewed its commitment to accelerate implementation of the social development agenda at the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, it was hindered by the economic crisis, high food and fuel prices and climate change. It shared the view that the empowerment of people was central to achieving the overarching goals of social development. Its poverty eradication programmes focused on the promotion of broad-based growth sectors with the potential to create sustainable

livelihoods, especially for vulnerable groups such as youth.

60. Expanding access to quality academic and vocational education and skills training and promoting entrepreneurship also remained priorities. His delegation welcomed the continued focus on youth and called upon the Member States, the United Nations system and the relevant stakeholders to implement fully the recommendations contained in the outcome document of the 2011 High-level Meeting on Youth. It also welcomed the implementation of the Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda and the appointment of an Envoy on Youth.

61. Botswana recognized the need to intensify efforts to reduce inequality and promote the rights and well-being of vulnerable groups and was committed to implementing the commitments made in the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development. Furthermore, it recognized the importance of mainstreaming disability in its development processes. It was preparing a national policy on the elderly and was closely following the discussions on strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons, including the possibility of drafting a legal instrument. It welcomed the emphasis given in the ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda to the urgency of addressing inequality, social inclusion, empowerment, full and productive employment and decent work and social protection.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.