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Chair: Mr. Yaremenko (Vice-Chair) (Ukraine)

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In the absence of Mr. Braun (Luxembourg), Mr. Yaremenko (Ukraine), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 25: Social development (*continued*)
(A/74/184)

(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/74/135 and A/74/205)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family (*continued*) (A/74/61-E/2019/4, A/74/133, A/74/170, A/74/170/Corr.1, A/74/175 and A/74/206)

1. **Mr. Itegboje** (Nigeria) said that the adoption of General Assembly resolution 73/25, which proclaimed 24 January the International Day of Education, had marked a watershed in the recognition of the fundamental role of education in building resilient, peaceful and inclusive societies. All stakeholders must work in a concerted manner to support quality education for all, as it was the cornerstone of social development. Cognizant of the fact that society was only as strong as its weakest link, in January 2019 his Government had enacted a law prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities, and in 2018 it had enacted a law mandating that all tiers of government and national institutions must establish centres for senior citizens, in order to respond to the welfare needs of the elderly.

2. **Ms. Kormanova** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that quality education followed by decent work were the top priorities of young Bulgarians, based on a recent nationwide survey that the youth delegates had conducted. Teachers should use more inspiring, modern methods to develop the skills that young people would need for the labour market of the future. Moreover, digital technologies should be better incorporated into secondary and tertiary curricula to increase accessibility and inclusivity.

3. **Mr. Daskalov** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young Bulgarians demanded fair pay that reflected their level of education, the complexity of their positions and their practical expertise. Furthermore, remuneration must be enough to support an adequate standard of living and employment should be compatible with work-life balance. Those issues could be addressed through paid internships that were part of the educational curriculum, informal education, vocational education that included apprenticeships, and apprenticeships that matched market demands and were

partially funded by Governments. Also, employers must invest in the continuous professional development of their employees, providing them with opportunities for growth.

4. The jobs of the future must decouple economic growth from environmental degradation. Young people were a driving force for change, but they could not act alone. He called for collective action from the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Member States to develop and implement youth-centred policies, with a focus on learner-centric education, quality employment, well-being and protection of the environment.

5. **Mr. Alsenan** (Kuwait) said that the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development had contributed to 981 development projects in 107 States. Since its inception it had provided \$21.7 billion worth of grants, showing his country's commitment to development. His Government recognized that social protection policies were a critical component of national development strategies.

6. In view of the vital role of the family in social development, the Kuwaiti Constitution provided for its support and protection. The Government had recently promulgated a law providing for public assistance for every citizen in need. It attached particular importance to the social protection of vulnerable groups. Benefits for the elderly included a monthly stipend, free health care and State-provided housing. Kuwait also had a robust policy to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, which was designed to enable them to contribute fully to society and play a part in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Other policies in place to support the country's young people and their economic empowerment included a government-established fund for small and medium-sized enterprises, which created employment for young people while boosting economic growth. The Ministry of Youth played an important role in working to improve young people's lives, in collaboration with public and private sector entities.

7. **Ms. Mehdiyeva** (Azerbaijan) said that her country's social development model was inclusive and people-centred, with a range of State programmes and initiatives that had brought about significant improvements in the well-being of the population. The strong economic performance of Azerbaijan over the previous 15 years had resulted in a noteworthy reduction in poverty and the growth of the middle class. In 2019 alone, the minimum wage had almost doubled, the minimum pension had risen by 40 per cent, and almost universal pension coverage had been achieved.

8. Internally displaced persons were entitled to a monthly allowance and adequate housing; in 2019, more than 300,000 internally displaced persons had been provided with new houses in the newly established settlements. The Government had increased public expenditure on health sixfold since 2000, using the funds to renovate health infrastructure and increase the number and availability of pharmaceutical products provided to the population at no cost. A mandatory health insurance scheme was currently being piloted, with a view to strengthening financial protection and ensuring quality health services for all. A State programme for rural areas was improving infrastructure and social services and increasing employment. Azerbaijan also had dedicated youth policies aimed at, *inter alia*, reducing youth unemployment and enhancing vocational education and training.

9. Education was a top priority, and the national qualifications framework for lifelong learning ensured compliance with European higher education standards. Implementation of the framework was supported by a European Union technical assistance project. Children with special needs, refugees and internally displaced persons were entitled to free education at all State schools and universities and to free medical care. Lastly, a programme on inclusive education for persons with disabilities, currently being piloted in six schools, marked the transition from a medical model to a social model of education.

10. **Ms. Belhoulm** (United Arab Emirates) said that the first young astronaut from the United Arab Emirates was currently on the international space station, which demonstrated that when States empowered their youth, the sky was the limit. The Government had recently appointed the youngest-ever female Minister for Youth, who had been 22 years old at the time of her appointment. It had also adopted a youth agenda, which had been drafted by and for young people and was in line with the United Nations Youth Strategy.

11. The Government had determined a number of priority areas in relation to youth. First, it wanted to empower young people to play a role in policy-development. In 2019 the Government had allocated one seat to young people on the boards of all federal entities and had established youth councils at the municipal, regional and national levels, as well as ministerial youth councils. Second, it hoped to educate productive and pioneering young people: to that end the Government was establishing vocational training centres to enhance the employability of young people in various sectors.

12. **Mr. AlZarooni** (United Arab Emirates), speaking as a youth delegate, said that a third priority area was to

support young people in their plans for the future. An initiative entitled “youth launchpad” had been established to help young people with projects in 29 areas. A fourth priority was mental health. The two youth delegates had established a non-profit organization, in coordination with other groups, to carry out awareness-raising campaigns, provide training courses and organize volunteering in mental health and psychiatric facilities. The Government was also supporting youth initiatives across the Arab world, including a programme to produce one million Arab programmers. It was important to continue concerted efforts to support young people in all areas.

13. **Mr. Shala** (Albania), speaking as a youth delegate, said that successful implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy hinged on effective collaboration between United Nations entities and young people, and he therefore called for the establishment of youth engagement platforms within each relevant United Nations body. Given the central role of education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Governments must do more to end the inequality in educational opportunities for young men and women, and to promote education for sustainable development. Greater efforts were also needed to increase employment opportunities for young people and reduce the gender pay gap. Policies that encouraged entrepreneurship and job creation would be key to avoiding the brain drain, a phenomenon that afflicted developing countries like Albania.

14. Young people tended to be relegated to the role of victims of conflict, but they had potential to play a major role in conflict resolution and peacekeeping. In that connection, he commended the adoption of Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#). The creation of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans represented a concrete step towards reconciliation and the promotion of regional cooperation among young people. He therefore appreciated the \$2.1 million worth of support provided to the Office by the United Nations, and he called for further support. In a divided world, young people stood for collective action: the youth climate action marches represented a historic shift in approach to urgent global challenges.

15. **Ms. Pierre Fabre** (Haiti) said that for many countries, including Haiti, inclusive social development and the reduction of inequalities remained elusive. Her Government was striving to implement a coherent set of policies in line with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with a view to creating better living conditions for all its citizens. In that spirit it had launched the Caravan for Change

initiative to mobilize domestic resources for infrastructure work across the country's 10 departments. The development of infrastructure would benefit agriculture, the crux of the Haitian economy, as well as contributing to rural development and environmental protection.

16. The Government had also been making efforts in the education sector, with the result that 75 per cent of primary-age children were now enrolled in school. It was aware of the need to increase that proportion, improve the quality of the education system and make education accessible to all, without distinction. Major efforts were likewise needed to create new jobs, in particular for young people and women, and to reduce social inequalities. To progress, Haiti needed not only national initiatives, but support from the international community, which must fulfil its commitments and assist the Government to move ahead with the priorities it had established.

17. **Ms. Bernal Prado** (Chile) said that in 2019, Chile had presented its second voluntary national review, identifying its main challenges in working towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda should be implemented through partnerships among civil society, the private sector, academia and State entities. With that in mind, Chile had adopted national agreements that were agreed by multiple political and civil society actors, to address the country's major challenges. Intersectoral boards were working towards solutions to the problems that affected 16 vulnerable groups that had been identified.

18. A national agreement on comprehensive development contained proposals for advancing holistic, inclusive and sustainable development, with a particular emphasis on overcoming poverty. A second national agreement on childhood was designed to foster the integral development of all children, enabling them to fulfil their potential so that no child was left behind. One of the Government's major recent commitments had been to improve the situation of the elderly through various social programmes and a comprehensive reform of the pension system, which was currently before Congress. Lastly, her Government's commitment to the environment was reflected in its implementation of a range of plans, strategies and legislation, as well as its hosting of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in December 2019. Chile was also making progress in the use of renewable energy, the transformation of its energy mix and protection of the oceans. Establishing national agreements with the involvement of all social groups was not an easy route to embark on, but the complexity

of modern societies meant that inclusive responses to their challenges were essential. Chile was convinced that its approach would lead to innovative, sustainable solutions.

19. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica) said that Jamaica remained concerned that Latin America and the Caribbean was the region where income inequality levels were the highest. His Government was focusing on inclusive, sustainable economic growth, economic opportunities, a peaceful society, social harmony and citizen security, all with the overarching goal of reducing inequality. Specific measures included the introduction of a fiscal management framework, public administration and legislative reforms and expansion of social protection coverage.

20. His Government was promoting dialogue among labour market stakeholders with a view to achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, and it would soon be convening consultations to discuss an adjustment to the minimum wage. For Jamaica, improving living standards and providing for the most vulnerable were intrinsically linked to the country's ability to recover from natural disasters, and the Government had therefore been working to put in place strategies to enable immediate emergency relief. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security continued to improve its services, including by opening new offices and establishing mobile offices to benefit rural communities. The Government was working to ensure that elderly people could contribute to an inclusive, resilient and prosperous Jamaica: it was currently revising its national policy for senior citizens, and it had initiated a registry that catalogued the skills of older people in order to facilitate their inclusion in the labour market. On 20 September it had commenced a month-long programme of activities to commemorate Senior Citizens' Week 2019, with events that highlighted older people's significant contribution to the economy.

21. The Government had prioritized the implementation of a law on disability, as well as increasing its financial support to persons disabilities to improve their access to medical care, education and assistive aids. It had made grant funding available to encourage their participation in the establishment of small businesses, with a view to fostering their economic independence. Lastly, the Government continued to invest in policies that supported families, in particular in poor households. For example, programmes were in place to encourage young fathers to play a more active role in their children's lives, and to support adolescent mothers' reintegration into formal education.

22. **Ms. Thong-Iam** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that equal opportunities and inclusivity were essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. While all of the Goals were important, equitable access to health care and inclusive education for all should be top priorities. Thailand had achieved universal health care, but achieving it worldwide remained a multifaceted challenge: countries must provide high quality care, ensure adequate disease prevention, find sustainable means of financing health care and provide for those at most risk of being left behind. For instance, although suicide was the second leading cause of death of children and adolescents, it was a low public health priority. Young people could play an important role by equipping themselves with the knowledge of how to prevent mental illnesses, and by promoting the adoption of healthy lifestyles by their families, peers and communities.

23. **Mr. Tongintee** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that inequalities in education harmed marginalized groups around the world. Persons with disabilities, children in rural areas, migrant children, adolescent mothers and elderly people, to name a few such groups, must receive special attention to ensure that they had educational opportunities on an equal footing with others. In cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Thai Government had established the Equitable Education Fund to support the inclusion of disadvantaged children. It had also implemented a programme to provide Internet access to more than 25,000 rural villages and promote distance learning. Education should not be limited to classrooms, nor should it focus only on preparing young people for the labour market: it must prepare everyone to become active, productive members of society. Young people were determined to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and build a better world. As a digital generation, they would harness the potential of technology for quality education and better health outcomes for all. For them to make their enormous contribution, however, they must be included.

24. **Ms. Fofana** (Burkina Faso) said that her Government had put various projects in place to fight poverty: a cash transfer programme, launched in 2015, had distributed more than \$19 million to over 100,000 families; a programme for the economic empowerment of young people and women, established in 2017, had already funded more than 11,000 micro-projects with a total of \$4.5 million; and there were dedicated funds in place to finance low-interest loans for the entrepreneurial activities of low-income populations.

25. Burkina Faso had almost achieved gender parity in terms of access to primary and secondary education, with girls having slightly more access, and the Government was particularly concentrating its informal and literacy efforts on women and girls. One government programme had provided more than \$2 million in subsidies for girls newly enrolled in early childhood education. The Government had also adopted an education strategy for students living in areas with major security challenges, convening special examination sessions for more than 330,000 students who had been affected by the closure of more than 2,000 schools.

26. The Government had adopted various inclusive policies, including a policy providing free health care for children under 5 years of age and pregnant women. It had instituted a quota of 10 per cent for qualified persons with disabilities in the civil service. Furthermore, a road map for the reintegration into society of those ostracized because of allegations of witchcraft had helped a significant proportion of those people to reconnect with their families.

27. Although the Government was making major efforts to achieve growth and reduce inequalities, the effects on the day-to-day lives of the country's people remained negligible. Burkina Faso remained committed to enhancing the protection of the most vulnerable, and invited Member States to increase international cooperation to support social development at all levels.

28. **Mr. Hermann** (Denmark) said that the world's 1.8 billion young people had a critical role to play in development. However, if young people's potential was to be harnessed, they must have not only a voice but also an active role in development, including at the United Nations. Denmark had demonstrated its commitment to youth involvement by providing financial support for the United Nations Youth Strategy.

29. **Ms. Bjerre** (Denmark), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people were capable of more than they were given credit for, but they could not effect change alone: decision-makers must work with them as partners. Parameters for assessing social development were needed, and young people should play a part in the process of developing such parameters. For instance, Denmark collected vast amounts of statistical data, but numbers alone could not provide a nuanced picture of what was meant by quality education. To ensure that no one was left behind, Denmark and other countries must focus efforts on generating a more holistic approach to measuring levels of social development.

30. While youth participation at the United Nations was growing, it was important to ensure that youth

forums were not merely a box-ticking exercise: they should serve as stepping stones for higher-level youth participation, for instance in the high-level political forum and the General Assembly. Young people's participation would be most meaningful if it was mainstreamed across the United Nations system. Failing to continuously include the young generation in decision-making processes was to undermine the longevity and potential of contemporary development initiatives, and Member States must therefore prioritize youth involvement.

31. In order to harness the expert knowledge of young people and their motivation to make change happen, Member States should first establish strong and independent national youth councils that could facilitate formal and diverse youth representation. Second, they should include local youth councils in local Sustainable Development Goal working groups. Lastly, Governments must recognize that young people constituted a highly diverse group and reach out to those who were not yet included.

32. **Ms. Tshering** (Bhutan) said that investments in education and health, which were ultimately investments in human capacity, were integral to achieving both the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Bhutan had made significant progress against key health outcomes over the past several decades: free basic public health services were guaranteed by the Constitution, the country's total health expenditure was predominantly government-financed and household out-of-pocket costs were relatively low. Approximately 9 per cent of the national budget was currently allocated to health care. Through various health initiatives, Bhutan had succeeded in reducing the incidence of non-communicable diseases, and the 1,000 Golden Days programme, which provided support to mothers and infants during the first 1,000 days of a child's life, would be strengthened with a new breastfeeding allowance.

33. The Constitution established the right of every child to a free basic education. The Royal Government had consistently allocated more than 10 per cent of the total national budget to education, and the country was close to achieving universal primary education. In order to increase students' employability upon graduation, the Government had developed a blueprint for reforms to the country's technical and vocational education and training system. In that connection, it would welcome the opportunity to learn from partners who had experience in managing vocational and technical education programmes. In June 2019, the Government had revised the public service pay scales to make teachers the highest paid civil servants in the country. It

hoped to attract the brightest to the profession, as a way to invest in the country's most important asset - its future generations.

34. Bhutan was a small country and a least developed country, and it continued to face many challenges in its efforts to spur transformative change. It was determined to continue to invest in its human capital and to create the conditions for its people to live happy lives in an equitable society. However, international cooperation would continue to be necessary to complement its national efforts.

35. **Mr. Opimakh** (Belarus) said that his Government was consistently working to draft and implement strategies and measures to ensure that no one was left behind. It had concluded its work on a comprehensive youth strategy to cover the period through 2030, which was designed to improve the living conditions of young people and enable them to fully contribute to their society's socioeconomic development. Belarus had an ageing population, with the proportion of its people who were 65 and older, currently 14.7 per cent, forecast to grow to 20.5 per cent by 2030. The State therefore needed to formulate policies that would assist older persons, support their social integration and tap into their potential, so that they could enjoy fulfilling lives and participate in different areas of society. Accordingly, the Government was developing an active ageing strategy with a view to changing the paradigm and helping older persons to be active, healthy, mobile, safe and cared for, with the opportunity to study and contribute to society.

36. Belarus had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016 and had begun to implement its national action plan on persons with disabilities for the period until 2025. The Government had begun drafting legislation on the social integration of persons with disabilities, with the involvement of associations of persons with disabilities, and it was also focusing on inclusive employment, inter alia by promoting flexible arrangements, such as telecommuting.

37. Recognizing that social development was not possible without joint, coordinated efforts by the Government, civil society and the private sector, Belarus was introducing procurement mechanisms to involve non-governmental and non-profit organizations in social service and health care provision. In 2018 in Minsk, with the support of the national coordinator for the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations Development Programme, Belarus had held the first public hearing for socially responsible companies interested in undertaking social projects.

38. The scale of social progress and social challenges, including those brought by technological progress, necessitated additional analysis and forecasting. Only with a coordinated approach would the international community manage to respond effectively and live up to the main commitment of the 2030 Agenda, to leave no one behind.

39. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that his Government prioritized reducing poverty and combating social exclusion, especially for vulnerable groups. Having ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in 2014, his Government had drafted a national policy and laws to guide implementation.

40. Despite its limited resources, the Government had always protected vulnerable groups and had signed the relevant national, regional and international instruments. In addition, it had implemented a social protection policy to mainstream their needs within the national 2025 development plan and within the more recent plan, which covered the period from 2018 to 2027. Youth participation, in particular, was essential to the sustainable development of Burundi, as young people under the age of 25 years constituted more than half of its population. The President had therefore created a youth investment bank to promote creativity and entrepreneurship.

41. The Government had made particular efforts to increase the number of women in government positions and in the defence and security sector, with positive results. Furthermore, there was nearly gender parity in primary school enrolment owing to the Government's provision of free primary education as a means of eliminating obstacles for girls. A measure to provide free health care for women giving birth, children under the age of 5 years and the elderly had also produced satisfying results. Lastly, the Government had implemented a programme to combat youth homelessness.

42. Despite those achievements, much remained to be done. The Government urged its partners to offer technical and financial support to help it to overcome challenges relating to dropout rates for girls, violence against women and girls, poverty among vulnerable groups and youth unemployment.

43. **Ms. Gerengbo Yakivu** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that following the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, her Government had committed to eliminating poverty, promoting full productive employment and fostering social integration. Its efforts

centred on supporting family stability, as the family unit provided the foundation for individuals' development.

44. As young people comprised over half of the country's population, the Government had implemented a youth policy to create jobs for young people and promote their entrepreneurship. The Head of State had also established a ministry responsible for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, which was headed by a woman with a disability. The Constitution contained specific protective measures for persons with disabilities and the elderly, and an implementing law indicated how those rights were to be protected.

45. Effective implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and its programme of action was needed; official development assistance (ODA) remained critical in that regard. South-South cooperation must also be strengthened to support the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

46. **Mr. Butt** (Pakistan) said that, despite the tremendous progress made in reducing global poverty, significant disparities and challenges remained across regions and within countries. Poverty and inequality were multifaceted challenges that needed multipronged solutions. His country's policies were therefore aligned with the 2030 Agenda: the new Government's priorities included revitalization of the economy, youth employment, sustainable housing, institutional reforms, mitigation of the effects of climate change, universal access to health care and education, food, energy and water security, access to clean drinking water and sanitation. Earlier in 2019, the country's largest-ever poverty-eradication programme, Ehsaas, had been launched. The programme targeted vulnerable groups, addressed malnutrition and deprivation, and would particularly support the parts of the country and sectors of society that were lagging behind in terms of development. The Government was also taking steps to create an enabling environment for investment, and to encourage sustainable, inclusive growth by investing in the country's human capital, empowering women and formalizing the informal economy.

47. **Ms. Bakytbekkyzy** (Kazakhstan) said that, despite the downward trends in the global economy, Kazakhstan had increased social support and protection by annually augmenting its financing for children, youth, women, older persons and persons with disabilities. Its national strategy and economic policy would guarantee higher-quality education, health care, affordable social housing and enhanced social security. National policies for the advancement of youth and women had led to impressive numbers of women

enrolled in higher education, in the world of business and women entrepreneurs, and 2019 had been designated the Year of Youth. Kazakhstan had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016, and had a programme focused on productive employment for persons with disabilities. To combat poverty, the Government had created a three-tiered social security system. Kazakhstan promoted the concept of active ageing, ensuring that older persons enjoyed full rights without distinction or discrimination.

48. Kazakhstan had offered to establish a United Nations centre for the Sustainable Development Goals in its territory, with the mandate to assist the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan. The Government aspired to achieve the objectives of the United Nations by translating them into national policies and programmes. The milestone of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, in 2020, should provide impetus to enhance international cooperation and put an end to distrust and militancy. Kazakhstan called on the global community to increase momentum towards security, cooperation and mutual trust. All Member States should take care of their young people to ensure their meaningful engagement in the development of a new economy, one with state-of-the-art technology, environmental protection and health care and education for all.

49. **Ms. Bouchikhi** (Morocco) said that the new, people-centred development approaches, which closely linked development and human rights, were reflected in her country's 2011 Constitution, which was built around the principles of solidarity, security, freedom and dignity. Morocco had a number of State policies and programmes to promote the rights and enhance the economic and social status of vulnerable groups. It was pursuing a human-centred development model, with an emphasis on addressing social marginalization and urban and rural poverty.

50. The Government had adopted a gender policy that mainstreamed fairness and equality and gender considerations in public policies. It also had a specific child protection policy, which primarily aimed to prevent violence and exploitation. With regard to the elderly, the Government had developed a set of procedures and programmes aimed at their rehabilitation and protection from marginalization. It had also established centres for older people, which provided services ranging from mental and physical health services to entertainment and opportunities to play sports.

51. Morocco had created a social care system that was designed to be sustainable, and a social cohesion fund,

an important mechanism for supporting vulnerable groups. Its Constitution prohibited all forms of discrimination, and explicitly promoted the empowerment of persons with disabilities through policies for their rehabilitation and integration. The Government had developed a number of literacy programmes and policies and established a national literacy agency. It had also given impetus to a national migration and asylum strategy, which protected the rights of refugees. Those and other programmes and initiatives had enabled Morocco to make noteworthy economic and social progress over the past 10 years.

52. **Mr. Cognac** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, Member States had made 10 commitments to advance social development, among them a commitment to promote the goal of full employment as a basic priority of economic and social policies, and to enable all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work. Nearly a quarter-century later, a majority of the 3.3 billion people employed globally experienced a lack of material well-being, economic security, equal opportunities or scope for human development. An estimated 172 million people worldwide were unemployed, including over 59 million young people.

53. Those statistics must be considered against the backdrop of the unprecedented transformations that were affecting the labour market, with technological and demographic changes, and climate change, which were all shaping a dramatically different world of work. Accordingly, in the previous month the General Assembly had adopted a resolution welcoming the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and calling on United Nations bodies to consider integrating the Declaration's policy proposals into their work (A/RES/73/342). It was necessary to strengthen people's capacity to benefit from the opportunities of the changing world of work, strengthen labour institutions to ensure adequate protection of all workers, and promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full, productive employment and decent work for all. In short, investing wisely in decent work helped to reduce inequality.

54. A human-centred approach to the future of work entailed harnessing the fullest potential of technological progress and productivity growth, while focusing on lifelong learning, recognizing the private sector as the principal source of economic growth and job creation, and promoting workers' rights and gender equality, both of which were essential for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

55. **Mr. Biryukov** (Russian Federation) said it was regrettable that the Ukrainian representatives had remained silent with regard to the socioeconomic situation in their country, given that social development was the topic of the present meeting. Apart from some general assurances regarding sustainable development, they had not provided any information about their Government's efforts to create decent working conditions, improve the well-being of its population, or provide access to education, including in native languages, high-quality medical services or even social protection for pensioners, persons with disabilities or other vulnerable groups. The Ukrainian delegation had instead used the meeting to make hackneyed, politicized and fallacious allegations against the Russian Federation, with the aim of absolving the Ukrainian authorities of responsibility for the fratricidal civil war in the Donbas region. It was most unfortunate that the Ukrainian diplomats had drawn Ukrainian young people into their games.

56. With regard to the remarks made by the representative of Georgia concerning the Russian occupation of Abkhazia, he recalled that the Republic of Abkhazia was a sovereign State. He therefore recommended that his Georgian colleagues meet with representatives of Abkhazia to resolve the pending humanitarian issues. Noting that the Georgian youth delegate had made references to her Abkhaz peers, including in the context of promoting the Abkhaz language in the area of education, he regretted that Abkhaz young people were not present to represent themselves.

57. **Ms. Horbachova** (Ukraine) said that for more than six years, the Russian occupying administration in the autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in particular had evinced the most blatant disregard for fundamental human freedoms and international human rights law. The Russian Federation increasingly sought to divert attention from the need to comply with international humanitarian law and its own accountability by trying to create a false impression of a blooming and prosperous Crimea. Russia must comply with international humanitarian and human rights law by fulfilling the duties and obligations of an occupying Power as set out in the Hague and Geneva Conventions, and it must respect Ukrainian legislation. Any attempt to legitimize its illegal occupation through so-called independent monitoring or the holding of illegal elections in the temporarily occupied territories was null and void and without legal effect. The continuing Russian aggression not only negatively affected the security and humanitarian situation in the Luhansk and

Donetsk regions, but also seriously undermined the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of the civilians who remained in those regions, which were not under the Ukrainian Government's control. The grave abuses of rights and fundamental freedoms committed by the Russian Federation in Donbas and Crimea must not be ignored. Russia must abide by its obligations as an occupying Power and prevent a humanitarian crisis in the territories under its temporary control.

58. **Ms. Gumberidze** (Georgia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the Russian occupation of the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia had been recognized by numerous international bodies, including the European Court of Human Rights, which had concluded that the Russian Federation exercised effective control over those territories and thus bore sole responsibility for the human rights situation and the violations committed there. The occupation was not only military, but affected all aspects of life. The Georgian authorities did not have effective control and therefore could not solve the problems facing young people in those territories: those issues would have to be resolved at the international level. The occupation affected the social and economic situation across Georgia by weakening the country's potential to attract foreign investment.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.