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Chair: Mr. Doualehyay (Djibouti)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Organization of work ([A/76/250](#), [A/C.3/76/1](#), [A/C.3/76/L.1](#), [A/C.3/76/L.1/Add.1](#) and [A/C.3/76/L.1/Rev.1](#))

1. **The Chair** said that the organization of the work of the Committee was contained in document [A/C.3/76/L.1/Rev.1](#), and the note by the Secretariat concerning the allocation of agenda items was contained in document [A/C.3/76/1](#).

2. The revised modalities proposed by the Bureau for the work of the Committee had been circulated in a letter dated 10 September 2021, following consultations with the membership and taking into account the continuation of physical distancing guidelines and other constraints imposed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The revised modalities were largely based on those that had been successfully implemented during the seventy-fifth session. Given the limitations on the number of meetings that could be held in person at United Nations Headquarters, a single general debate would be held through in-person formal meetings. Representatives would be able to choose to deliver their statements in the general debate at formal meetings in person, virtually or by pre-recorded video.

3. He recalled the guidelines concerning the conduct of the Committee's work that were set out in chapter II of the report of the General Committee ([A/76/250](#)) and drew the attention of the Committee to paragraphs 11 to 13 of the report, on the further biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items on the agenda of the General Assembly, including through the introduction of a sunset clause; on strengthening synergies and complementarities in the work and outcomes of the Assembly and its Main Committees, as well as the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, in line with Assembly resolution [73/341](#), when covering interrelated issues; and on the consideration by the Committee of the best possible way to conduct discussions on the impact of the pandemic within the agenda of the Assembly. He also drew the attention of the Committee to paragraphs 70 to 84 of the report, on questions relating to the programme budget. Concerning the introduction of draft resolutions, he hoped that the main sponsors would continue to make only one statement at the time of action, as that would significantly improve the efficiency of the Committee's work. Draft resolutions that generally involved lengthy negotiations should be drafted by the main sponsors as early as possible in the session, and all submission deadlines should be observed.

4. He took it that the Committee agreed to those recommendations.

5. *It was so decided.*

6. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that the General Assembly had decided in its resolution [75/243](#), paragraph 9, that in the event that the Committee for Programme and Coordination could not provide conclusions and recommendations on a given programme of the proposed programme budget, that programme should be reviewed by the relevant Main Committees responsible for those mandates in a timely manner so that the Fifth Committee could discuss and approve the related budget. The Committee for Programme and Coordination, at its sixty-first session, held in June 2021, had not recommended the approval of three programmes of the proposed programme budget for 2022, namely programmes 14, 20 and 24, which contained mandates under the purview of the Third Committee. Those programmes should therefore be discussed by the Third Committee under agenda item 139, on programme planning. In accordance with resolution [75/243](#), it was the responsibility of the membership to discuss the substance of programmes that had not received a conclusion or recommendation from the Committee for Programme and Coordination. He looked forward to having constructive discussions about such programmes during the present session.

7. **Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) said that, in accordance with what had been stated by the representative of Brazil, resolution [75/243](#) was clear on the issue of programmes for which the Committee for Programme and Coordination had not provided conclusions and recommendations. The programme of work of the Third Committee should therefore include the relevant programmes under agenda item 139.

8. **Mr. González Behmaras** (Cuba) said that his delegation supported the proposal put forward on holding discussions, under agenda item 139, on the subprogrammes or programmes that had been left open by the Committee for Programme and Coordination and that were part of the mandate of the Third Committee. His delegation hoped that the Bureau would find an opportunity for such discussions in the Committee's programme of work.

9. Fair treatment must be ensured for all delegations in carrying out the work of the Committee, in particular in terms of assigning rooms for delegations to hold informal consultations on ongoing negotiations. Discrimination in that regard against a group of countries within a Committee that promoted non-discrimination would be unacceptable. Rooms assigned for informal consultations should be open to all

Member States and should be large enough to allow for social distancing measures to be followed.

10. His delegation noted with considerable concern that the Zoom platform was being used for some of the work of the Committee. Restrictions had been imposed on the use of that platform as a result of the blockade on his country by the United States, which meant that his delegation was unable to participate on an equal footing in the work of the Committee. He therefore asked the Bureau and the Secretariat to take the necessary measures to use alternate platforms. The imposition of such unilateral coercive measures should not have an impact on equal participation by all delegations in the work of the Committee.

11. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the statements made by the representatives of Brazil, Egypt and Cuba regarding the need for the Committee to discuss programmes 14, 20 and 24, in accordance with paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution [75/243](#). The Committee should allocate the time necessary to discuss that important matter related to the implementation of the budget.

12. No discrimination of any kind should be allowed in the work of Committee. Access to the rooms assigned for informal consultations must be ensured for all States on an equal basis. The same applied to the online platforms that were being used by the Committee to communicate in the current difficult circumstances. No State should be excluded from them, in violation of the universally recognized principles and norms of international cooperation.

13. His delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the long-established practice of presenting draft resolutions in the Committee.

14. **Ms. Nour Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her delegation supported the proposal of the delegation of Brazil to refer the programmes on which the Committee for Programme and Coordination had not taken a decision to the relevant Main Committees. Her delegation furthermore recommended that the 2022 programme budget be considered by the General Assembly and hoped that programme 20 on human rights would be brought to the Third Committee prior to consideration by the Fifth Committee. Her delegation also aligned itself with the delegations of Cuba and the Russian Federation regarding the equitable treatment of all delegations when it came to the allocation of informal meeting rooms, as that was important for ensuring fair proceedings in the Committee.

15. **Mr. Roscoe** (United Kingdom) said that, despite the fact that the Committee for Programme and

Coordination had discussed and debated the relevant programmes for over one month, it had not been able to reach a conclusion, which meant that the issues contained therein were contentious and complicated from a budgetary perspective. Those matters should not be taken up by the Third Committee, given that they would be discussed in the Fifth Committee, which was the right place for consideration of budgetary matters. If the Third Committee took up those matters and was unable to resolve them, there was a risk of delaying the budget process in the Fifth Committee. The Third Committee should focus on its primary task of discussing human rights issues, while the Fifth Committee should focus on budgetary matters.

16. **Mr. Bourtembourg** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that his delegation supported the comments made by the representative of the United Kingdom. Issues pertaining to the Fifth Committee should be addressed in that Committee.

17. **Mr. Hill** (United States of America) said that his delegation echoed the views of the representatives of the United Kingdom and the European Union. The issue discussed belonged in the Fifth Committee.

18. **The Chair** said that, on the issue raised by the representative of Brazil regarding the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the item had been included on the agenda and the Bureau would consider the issue, including its impact on the programme of work. With regard to the informal consultations, registrations for informal virtual consultations of the Third Committee remained open, but only virtual formal consultations had been scheduled. The Bureau would approach the matter, taking into account the views expressed, in a transparent manner in order to ensure equal treatment for different processes. On the issue of the accessibility of the Zoom platform, the Bureau had taken note of the comments made and the Secretariat would continue to look into how the situation could be improved to ensure that the concerns raised were addressed.

19. He took it that the Committee agreed to those recommendations.

20. *It was so decided.*

21. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to extend an invitation to the special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council and other experts whose titles were included in document [A/C.3/76/CRP.1](#), to present their reports to, and interact with, the Committee.

22. *It was so decided.*

23. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to approve the organization of work, as contained in document [A/C.3/76/L.1/Rev.1](#), with the understanding that further adjustments would be made, if necessary, as the session progressed.

24. *It was so decided.*

25. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to take note of the status of documentation for the session as contained in document [A/C.3/76/L.1/Add.1](#).

26. *It was so decided.*

General debate

27. **The Chair** invited the Committee to begin its general debate.

28. Mr. Sakho (Guinea), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the COVID-19 pandemic continued to wreak havoc. Despite the existence of vaccines, they remained inaccessible to a significant number of countries. The pandemic had compounded existing challenges to development, exacerbated inequalities and negatively affected the ability of Governments to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Recognition of COVID-19 vaccines as global public goods would help to overcome the pandemic and recover the momentum for sustainable development.

29. Unilateral coercive measures had further compounded challenges to developing countries, severely constraining their ability to combat and recover from the pandemic. Countries that were affected by those measures needed the solidarity and support of the international community. In that context, the Group welcomed the theme of the seventy-sixth session “Building resilience through hope – to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalize the United Nations”.

30. The Committee’s discussions on social development should continue to focus on the impact of COVID-19 and on strategies to address inequality with the aim of implementing the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development and the 2030 Agenda. In that context, it was important to ensure global and equitable access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines at affordable prices. To ensure that everyone was vaccinated during the present year, the Group called for the rapid scaling up and expansion of global vaccine production, including in developing countries, through the dissemination of technology and know-how and within the framework of the Agreement on Trade-

Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) and the Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health.

31. The Group rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with an extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries, and reiterated the urgent need to eliminate them immediately.

32. The Group welcomed the convening, on 22 September 2021, of a high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, on the theme “Reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent”, and the adoption of a political declaration entitled “United against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”. The theme emphasized the need to acknowledge the suffering inflicted on millions of people as a result of slavery, the slave trade, colonialism, apartheid, genocide and other past tragedies, and noted that some States had apologized and paid reparations for the grave violations committed. Those that had not yet expressed remorse or presented apologies should find a way to contribute to restoring the dignity of victims.

33. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was a milestone document in preventing, combating and eliminating all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Group invited delegations to consider the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration as an opportunity to rise in solidarity against racism and racial discrimination, the consequences of which had been even more dramatic as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

34. Strengthening multilateralism and international development cooperation, especially North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, was fundamental to ensuring sustainable development and to promoting the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. South-South cooperation should complement rather than be seen as a substitute for North-South cooperation.

35. The objectives of the 1994 International Year of the Family had included strengthening national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor family policies and respond to problems affecting families. The Group noted with appreciation that the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes ([A/76/61-E/2021/4](#)) recorded efforts by Member States to support families in

vulnerable situations, improve work-family balance and strengthen relevant national institutions. Member States were encouraged to further invest in family-oriented policies and programmes as important tools for fighting poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

36. The devastating impact of the pandemic on the lives of older persons and the disproportionate threat it presented to their health, lives, rights and well-being were a matter of grave concern. The international community must work to eliminate structural and institutional prejudice, discrimination and stigmatization and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by older persons. The well-being and perspectives of persons with disabilities, who had also experienced increased inequalities and exclusion, must also be considered in COVID-19 response efforts.

37. **Mr. Biang** (Gabon), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the efforts made by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization (WHO) in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic were commendable. The far-reaching effects of the pandemic could widen existing gaps and slow implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. The obstacles in accessing vaccines, particularly in Africa, which had received only 2 per cent of the more than 5.7 billion COVID-19 doses administered worldwide, continued to be a cause of concern. Political controversies around the recognition of vaccines and considerations related to vaccine passports were also disheartening. International solidarity was needed to ensure the fair and equal distribution of accessible and affordable vaccines for all, including those who were subject to sanctions and those in vulnerable situations. The COVID-19 vaccine must be treated as a global public good for health.

38. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was a guide for the international community to commit to a world in which there was universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination. The Group welcomed the recent adoption of a political declaration on the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action and a resolution for the establishment of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent; commended the celebration of the first commemoration of the International Day for People of African Descent; and advocated the effective and full implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

39. States should reinforce laws prohibiting racial discrimination and promote greater knowledge about the cultural heritage of people of African descent and the contributions they had made to the advancement of

humanity. Governments should reinforce remedies for violations connected to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. All persons must have access to effective and adequate remedies and enjoy the right to seek just and adequate reparations for damages resulting from discrimination. States must ensure inclusive and quality education for all, including for people of African descent and persons living with disabilities.

40. It was necessary to implement international, regional and national strategies, targets and monitoring mechanisms aimed at eradicating extreme poverty. States must reinforce the means for all, including women and girls in remote and rural areas and in conflict-stricken economies, to participate in decision-making, thereby creating a policy and regulatory environment that would reduce inequalities and enable all people, including people of African descent, to benefit from expanding global employment and economic opportunities.

41. The Group was concerned about the economic hardships and discrimination faced by widows worldwide, especially in developing countries. The protection of human rights and the realization of the economic empowerment of all women and girls, regardless of their marital status, including widows, was critical to the eradication of poverty, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of gender equality.

42. The Group welcomed the progress made to achieve a world fit for children, who had been severely affected by the pandemic as a result of school closures and the suspension of social and economic activities. There was a risk that the progress made in the previous two decades to ensure that millions of children had a better chance of living a healthy life and achieving their potential would be reversed. Although substantial progress had been made in reducing child mortality in recent decades, continuing poverty, the digital divide, discrimination, diseases, disasters, violence and conflict were grave threats.

43. **Mr. Zhang Jun** (China), speaking also on behalf of Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominica, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Zimbabwe, as well as the

State of Palestine, said that, given the severe impact of the pandemic on social and economic development, in particular in developing countries, Member States needed to adopt a global response based on unity, solidarity and international cooperation.

44. The use of unilateral coercive measures against developing countries was a cause for concern and ran counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, multilateralism and the basic norms of international relations. The grave economic, social and humanitarian consequences of such measures, which severely hindered efforts to promote and protect human rights in targeted countries, in particular in the context of the pandemic, were deeply troubling. Unilateral coercive measures had caused a severe shortage of essential supplies, including medical equipment for COVID-19; exacerbated poverty; and affected the ability of humanitarian organizations to deliver life-saving assistance. Those measures deprived people, in particular women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, of the full realization of their human rights.

45. The Secretary-General, on 26 March 2020, had appealed for the waiving of sanctions that undermined the capacities of countries to respond to the pandemic, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on 23 March 2020, had called for the easing or suspension of sectoral sanctions in the light of their debilitating impact on the health sector and human rights. Their delegations welcomed the statement of the Group of 77 and China calling for the adoption of urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries, as well as the declaration of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries condemning such measures and calling for their elimination to ensure the effectiveness of national responses to the pandemic.

46. Their delegations recognized the work undertaken by the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights; reaffirmed the 2030 Agenda; and recalled the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, including the omnibus resolution on a comprehensive and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in which the Assembly strongly urged States to refrain from promulgating or applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures that were not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Current unilateral coercive measures towards targeted countries must be completely and immediately lifted. It was imperative to ensure that affected countries had adequate resources and support for pandemic

response and recovery; that humanitarian aid could reach those in need without delay or impediment; and that the suffering of affected populations ceased immediately. States must avoid imposing future unilateral sanctions that were not in accordance with international law and the Charter. The current circumstances called for solidarity and unity rather than confrontation and division.

47. **Ms. Joyini** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) Core Group, as well as Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Honduras, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Panama, Peru, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand and Ukraine, said that the overarching goal of the Group was to work within the United Nations to ensure universal respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, regardless of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or sex characteristics, and with a particular focus on protection from violence and discrimination. The Group understood that the full and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the realization of its principle of leaving no one behind were only possible with the full decriminalization of all sexual orientations and gender identities globally.

48. Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, nine countries had decriminalized consensual same-sex relations and one country had decriminalized the existence of trans persons. However, 68 countries still criminalized consensual same-sex relations *de jure* and *de facto*, 13 explicitly criminalized trans persons and a further 37 countries criminalized trans persons through vagrancy, prostitution, morality, public nuisance or other laws.

49. The Group expressed its full support to the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and looked forward to the upcoming presentation of his report and his continued engagement with the Committee. As mentioned by the Independent Expert in his report, decriminalization of same-sex consensual activity was part of the duty of States, in compliance with their international obligations, to address acts of discriminatory violence. The Group was also in agreement with the Expert's view that social inclusion required the dismantling of all legislation that criminalized sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, or that negated a person's identity. Everyone should live free and equal, irrespective of who they were and who they loved.

50. In the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, it was essential to put an end to the multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. In order to really leave no one behind, the Group called for the full decriminalization of sexual orientation and gender identity by 2030.

51. **Mr. Gonzato** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia, said that the United Nations system must remain a guarantor of the protection and promotion of all human rights worldwide and of accountability for violations and abuses, wherever they were committed. The European Union therefore strongly supported the International Criminal Court.

52. The shrinking space for civil society and human rights defenders around the world was alarming. Member States must ensure accountability for all acts of intimidation and reprisal, and the rules of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations must be improved to make decisions more transparent and accountable, prevent unjustified deferrals and avoid the permanent re-election of the same members. The meaningful participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations was an important asset for all.

53. In 2021, the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, the European Union would continue to promote the elimination of child and forced labour in all its forms worldwide. Freedom of religion or belief for all individuals must also be promoted and protected. Everybody had the right to believe or not to believe, and to change their religion or belief and to manifest it, and all individuals must be protected from discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief.

54. The European Union would promote and scale up action to achieve gender equality and ensure the equal and full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, free from all forms of discrimination. It remained committed to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

55. The General Assembly was the proper place in which to address the human rights situation in different countries, which was not the prerogative of the universal periodic review. Deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Afghanistan, the European Union called for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons in that country to be respected, and the

safety of human rights defenders, journalists and media workers must also be protected. International humanitarian law, and freedom of movement for those who wished to leave Afghanistan must be respected, and unhindered humanitarian access must be ensured. Those responsible for serious human rights violations and abuses and international humanitarian law violations must be held accountable.

56. The situation in Myanmar was extremely worrying. The European Union reiterated its calls for an end to the violence, for the release of those arbitrarily detained in relation to the military coup of 1 February 2021, for safe and unimpeded humanitarian access and for an inclusive political solution aimed at restoring democracy and the rule of law. In that regard, it supported the implementation of a five-point consensus reached by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the work of the special envoy of ASEAN. It was necessary to address the situation of the Rohingya and other minorities and to ensure justice and accountability for gross violations of human rights, including for sexual and gender-based violence. All States should support and cooperate with the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar so that perpetrators were held accountable for their actions.

57. There had been no improvement in the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The authorities of that country should take concrete measures to immediately end violations and guarantee respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

58. The European Union reiterated its call on China to abide by its obligations under national and international law to respect and protect human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, especially in Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia. The existence of a large network of political re-education camps, widespread surveillance and systemic restrictions on freedom of religion or belief imposed against Uighurs and other minorities, as well as reports of forced labour, forced birth control and sexual and gender-based violence, were a matter of grave concern. China should ensure the rule of law, establish fair trial guarantees and thoroughly investigate reported cases of arbitrary detentions, ill-treatment and torture and harassment of human rights defenders and their families, with a view to ending such practices. The European Union encouraged the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to finalize and publish its assessment of allegations of serious human rights violations in Xinjiang. Furthermore, it urged the authorities in Beijing and Hong Kong to respect the rule of law, human rights, democratic principles, freedom of

press, independent judiciary and the high degree of autonomy of Hong Kong under the “one country, two systems” principle and in line with domestic and international obligations, in particular with regard to the upcoming Legislative Council elections.

59. A year after the presidential elections in Belarus, human rights defenders and independent media still faced brutal persecution. The European Union condemned the repression led by the Lukashenko regime and reiterated its call to release all persons who had been arbitrarily detained, halt the repression, hold perpetrators to account and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also condemned how migrants and refugees were being manipulated by the Belarusian authorities.

60. The European Union called upon all parties to the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia to observe an immediate ceasefire, start talks and halt any human rights and international humanitarian laws violations. All allegations of violations must be investigated.

61. In Syria, violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, particularly by the Syrian regime and its allies, remained persistent. The European Union reiterated its call for an end to those violations and emphasized the need to end impunity. It also reiterated its support for the activities of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. It called for full, safe and immediate humanitarian access to everyone in Syria.

62. Lastly, the European Union was seriously concerned about the continuing practice of a number of States to refuse to cooperate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations human rights mechanisms, as well as the impact of the widespread and deliberate destruction and damage caused to civilian infrastructure.

63. **Ms. Nour Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking on a point of order, said that another delegation had used the term “regime” to refer to the Syrian Arab Republic. No one was entitled to use such derogatory language when addressing other delegations; it was a flagrant violation of the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States. She hoped that the Chair would abide by the principles of the Charter, exercise the power to maintain a healthy diplomatic atmosphere, while

reserving the right of all to hold differing opinions, and take a decisive and firm stance in that regard.

64. **The Chair** said that the issue raised by the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic had been raised many times before and it was not a matter for the Chair or the Secretariat to address. Delegations wishing to respond to the content of a statement made by another Member State may exercise their right of reply in accordance with the rules of procedure.

65. **Mr. Skoknic Tapia** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had had a disproportionate impact on older persons. According to the Secretary-General’s policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 on older persons, released in 2020, violence against older persons had increased. Given that older persons accounted for most deaths from COVID-19, they should be declared a priority group to receive the vaccine, and should be provided accessible and quality health-care services. The human rights challenges faced by older persons in the context of the global pandemic had exacerbated the already existing violations to their rights. Older persons must be placed at the centre of public policy, and a robust agenda for older persons was crucial in recovery efforts.

66. The pandemic had amplified the widespread practice of discrimination against older persons, and the intersection of older age, gender and disability had resulted in aggravated forms of discrimination and in specific human rights violations. It was important to recognize how intersectionality might affect older persons, as well as its impact on their full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. According to WHO, acts of violence, neglect and abuse committed against older persons had risen sharply since the beginning of the pandemic. Governments should foster collaboration among relevant sectors to ensure the provision of coordinated support, accountability and protection.

67. With the increase in the number of older persons globally, societies were facing significant changes to their demographic structures, which would pose new challenges to development. The task to build back better provided an opportunity to address age discrimination and highlight issues of relevance to older persons. For an age-inclusive recovery from the pandemic, data systems must be strengthened to shed light on the structural and systemic ways in which older persons were left behind. The demographic trend presented an opportunity to implement long-term policies that promoted social inclusion, intergenerational solidarity

and the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of older persons.

68. Older persons were rights-holders who could make a significant contribution to the development of their societies. It was imperative to empower older persons to become active agents and beneficiaries of change. Decisive steps were needed to ensure their economic independence and autonomy, in particular given that older workers had been particularly affected by unemployment as a result of the pandemic. Supporting longer working lives in the face of ageism and post-pandemic vulnerabilities would require targeted measures, including wage subsidies, reskilling programmes, job creation schemes and addressing the digital gap that affected many older persons.

69. True social inclusion could only be achieved by recognizing the diversity of older persons, respecting their decisions and lifestyle choices and optimizing their opportunities to enjoy safe, inclusive and accessible public spaces. Long-term care strategies were fundamental to assist older persons and support their independence. Although the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing had positive implications for the enjoyment of some human rights by older persons, it was a non-legally binding instrument that had not been designed to comprehensively address existing protection gaps. Convinced that urgent discussions were needed between Member States and stakeholders on the measures required to fill those gaps, the Group looked forward to engaging constructively in the twelfth session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing.

70. **Ms. Trejo Muncia** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples, said that the pandemic had put a spotlight on a host of pre-existing challenges faced by most of the world's indigenous peoples, such as poverty, food insecurity and a lack of access to adequate health and social services. Indigenous elders, persons with underlying health conditions, persons with disabilities, women and children, and persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity were among the most vulnerable groups. COVID-19 recovery strategies must ensure that indigenous peoples' voices were heard. Ensuring an equitable distribution of safe and effective vaccines and access to health services, taking into account indigenous peoples' right to traditional medicines and health practices, was equally important.

71. The pandemic had shown the breadth of the digital and technological divide, and had affected important United Nations processes of interest to indigenous peoples. In that context, the Group fully supported the request made by indigenous peoples' organizations to

postpone, to the seventy-seventh session, the General Assembly's consideration of possible further measures to enhance the participation of indigenous peoples in United Nations meetings on issues affecting them.

72. The Group's work at the Committee would seek to advance the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other key human rights instruments. Advancing the rights of indigenous peoples also entailed the protection of indigenous human rights defenders, who had suffered an increase in attacks and reprisals since the start of the pandemic, which had also led to a loss of indigenous peoples' lands and territories. Indigenous women and girls faced a "shadow pandemic" of higher levels of discrimination and violence. It was essential to ensure that indigenous women and girls lived free from violence and fear and had full participation in political, economic, social and cultural life.

73. The languages of indigenous peoples were disappearing at an alarming rate. The Group's work at the Committee must contribute to reversing that trend. The Group had promoted the proclamation of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, set to commence in 2022, as a key tool for preserving and revitalizing those languages. Member States were encouraged to support efforts towards those ends.

74. As guardians of 80 per cent of the world's biodiversity, indigenous peoples were key climate action stakeholders and had much to contribute to overcoming the challenges of climate change, food insecurity and biodiversity conservation, as well as combating desertification and land degradation. It was necessary to act together to address those problems. As they worked to recover from the pandemic and address critical global issues, States must prioritize inclusion and sustainable development in partnership with indigenous peoples.

75. **Mr. Ligoya** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that discrimination based on gender was one of the greatest impediments to development, while the promotion of gender equality was an effective means of eradicating poverty. Through its Protocol on Gender and Development, SADC remained committed to removing all barriers towards the achievement of gender equality at the regional and national levels, including through gender-responsive legislation and policies. In 2016, SADC had revised the Protocol to align it with the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. However, the region still faced challenges, such as general discord between statutory and customary law, gender inequality

in the workplace and a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. To address them, SADC had established a regional multidimensional women's empowerment strategy, prioritized women's economic empowerment in the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap, 2015-2063, and created regional gender-responsive budgeting guidelines.

76. SADC had ratified international, continental and regional instruments that promoted and protected the rights of the child, prohibited child labour and all forms of abuse and prioritized education and training for children, as well as the eradication of poverty. As a result of the pandemic, which had disrupted social, health and education services, the number of children living in multidimensional poverty was estimated to have risen to 1.2 billion, an increase of 150 million. Children already living in poverty, in rural areas and in other vulnerable situations were the most affected.

77. SADC was also grappling with the problem of child, early and forced marriages. Over 125 million African women married before the age of 18 years, which had devastating consequences on their educational, economic and social prospects. To address the issue, SADC had adopted in 2016 the Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage, which entailed the harmonization of national laws to prevent child marriage in support of the African Union Campaign on Ending Child Marriage, among other initiatives. Despite the significant progress made by some States members of SADC in outlawing child marriages and enrolling girls who fell pregnant back in school after delivery, the pandemic posed a threat to the progress made.

78. To deal with the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, SADC member States continued to promote access to health care, including universal health coverage.

79. Twenty years since the holding of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Durban Review Conference, the problems the two conferences had sought to address persisted across the world. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the normative basis for international efforts to eliminate racial discrimination, still required robust implementation mechanisms.

80. **Mr. Aidid** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the world remained beleaguered by the devastating impacts of the pandemic. More than 11.9 million cases of COVID-19, and over 260,000 deaths, had been reported in the ASEAN region. Notwithstanding the

unprecedented circumstances, ASEAN remained committed to strengthening regional and international cooperation towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. In its efforts to advance comprehensive recovery in the region, ASEAN would continue its work on developing the Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD).

81. The ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group on Public Health Emergencies and other relevant ASEAN bodies had been pivotal in addressing the challenges of the pandemic. A response fund, a regional reserve of medical supplies for public health emergencies, a comprehensive recovery framework, a strategic framework on public health emergencies and standard operating procedures for public health emergencies had been established to ensure a coordinated and effective response. ASEAN commended WHO and the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility initiative for their efforts and reiterated the call for enhanced collaboration to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines were available and affordable to all as global public goods.

82. Given that human rights concerns had been exacerbated by the pandemic, States members of ASEAN had been working with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights in rolling out its priority programmes, strategically focusing on human rights and other cross-sectoral issues. The Commission was also addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in the context of public health and recovery responses to the pandemic.

83. The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development was an important platform in ensuring that the region's social development agenda remained on track. To ensure the protection and inclusion of all people of the region, ASEAN was committed to ensuring the full implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection, the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children. It also remained committed to implementing measures to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups in ASEAN.

84. There was an urgent need to ensure the inclusive and meaningful participation of women and girls in the ASEAN social and economic development agenda. In that regard, the ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit had been convened in 2020 and the ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security had been established,

outlining the region's commitment to gender equality, women's leadership and women's role and participation in implementing the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. In addition, the first data collection for the monitoring framework of the ASEAN Roadmap on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2025 had recently concluded.

85. ASEAN was committed to protecting the regional and global community against transnational crime and extremism, including through the ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime (2016–2025). In addition, ASEAN continued to make progress in implementing the Bohol Trafficking in Persons Work Plan 2017–2020.

86. ASEAN remained committed to a drug-free region and zero-tolerance approach towards illicit drugs through the ASEAN Work Plan in Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016–2025 and the extended ASEAN Cooperation Plan to Tackle Illicit Drug Production and Trafficking in the Golden Triangle 2020–2022. In view of rapidly growing cybercrime threats, ASEAN had established a cybersecurity coordinating committee, a cyber defence network and a cybersecurity and information centre of excellence. Cybersecurity activities and training programmes offered by the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence and the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre complemented existing ASEAN efforts in cybersecurity capacity-building.

87. **Ms. Novruz** (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that, at the eighteenth summit of the Movement, held in October 2019, Heads of State and Government had reiterated that democracy was a universal value based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives, and that while all democracies shared common features, there was no single model of democracy. Sovereignty and the right to self-determination must be respected, and they rejected any attempt to break down constitutional and democratic orders that had been legitimately established by the peoples

88. General Assembly resolution [67/19](#), in which the Assembly accorded to Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations, was a reflection of the international community's long-standing, principled support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, and for a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. The Movement strongly believed that Israel, as the occupying Power, must be held accountable for its

continued grave and systematic violations of both international human rights law and international humanitarian law in all occupied territories, including the Syrian Golan.

89. Solidarity was a broad concept encompassing the sustainability of international relations, peaceful coexistence, and the equity and empowerment of developing countries, whose ultimate goal was the full economic and social development of their peoples.

90. Human rights issues must be addressed in a fair and equal manner through a constructive, non-confrontational, non-politicized and non-selective approach based on dialogue that took into account the particularities of each country. Objectivity, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, impartiality, non-selectivity and transparency should be the guiding principles.

91. The Movement condemned manifestations and acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance against migrants, as well as the stereotypes often applied to them, including on the basis of religion or belief, and urged States to apply and reinforce existing laws to eradicate impunity for such acts.

92. The Movement was committed to promoting and protecting all universally recognized human rights, in particular the right to development as a universal and inalienable right and as an integral part of all universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, as highlighted at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly held on 22 September 2016 to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development.

93. High food price volatility directly impacted the fundamental human right to food. The resulting and ongoing food crisis posed a serious challenge to the efforts to combat poverty and hunger. The multiple and complex causes of the crisis required a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained response by the international community. In that regard, it was crucial to strengthen the Global Information and Early Warning System and the Committee on World Food Security to help to address and prevent the recurrence of food crises.

94. In conclusion, the Movement was very concerned by the growing recourse to unilateralism and unilaterally imposed measures that undermined the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The Movement was committed to promoting, preserving, revitalizing, reforming and strengthening multilateralism and the multilateral decision-making

process through the United Nations by strictly adhering to the Charter and international law in order to create a just and equitable world order and global democratic governance.

95. **Mr. Lam Padilla** (Guatemala), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Central American Integration System (SICA), said that the SICA region faced an acute crisis generated by the pandemic, including with regard to ensuring access to virtual and face-to-face education, which had been aggravated by structural pre-pandemic elements such as inequality and extreme poverty, as well as increasing vulnerability to climate change and biodiversity loss. There was an urgent need to strengthen health and education systems, as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

96. National health systems in the SICA region were responding to the pandemic in accordance with the protocols of WHO and the Pan American Health Organization, including by implementing cross-border collaboration aimed at providing comprehensive care for suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine and related health technologies must be made accessible to all at affordable prices. The role of WHO, donor countries and the private sector was essential in that regard.

97. SICA countries were committed to prioritizing and implementing affirmative actions to address the needs of the most vulnerable people, including Afrodescendants, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants, women, children and youth. Progress had been made in the establishment of regulations to ensure the equality, empowerment and inclusion of women and girls, and in the reform and creation of penal codes and national policies. Efforts were also being made to incorporate the right to a life free of violence in health policies, programmes and public actions, and to promote the full and meaningful political participation of women in decision-making processes.

98. The Coordination Centre for Disaster Prevention in Central America and the Dominican Republic, with the support of the Council of Foreign Ministers and the general secretariat of SICA, was introducing the necessary procedures and protocols to ensure that humanitarian assistance among SICA countries was expedited in the event of early warnings and emergencies.

99. SICA supported the strengthening of mechanisms to facilitate dialogue with indigenous peoples and Afrodescendants and, in that regard, welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution [75/314](#)

establishing the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent.

100. It was necessary to ensure that migration was safe, orderly and regular and to guarantee the human rights, fundamental freedoms and dignity of all migrants, regardless of their migratory status. SICA reaffirmed the need to effectively promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants and to address international migration jointly through international, regional and bilateral cooperation and dialogue while recognizing the roles and responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination in promoting and protecting the human rights of all migrants.

101. **Mr. Nze** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, China, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cambodia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominica, Iran), the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and the State of Palestine, said that, on the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance should remain a matter of priority for the international community. Any doctrine of racial superiority was scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous, and must be rejected along with theories that attempted to determine the existence of separate human races. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the political declarations of the tenth and twentieth anniversaries of its adoption provided a comprehensive United Nations framework and solid foundation for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

102. Despite decades-long efforts, the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance remained a long and arduous task and unfortunately gaps remained in the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples had long been suffering from systemic racism, racial discrimination and hate crime. The group was particularly saddened by the numerous tragic incidents resulting from racism and police brutality. Such instances were a reminder that chronic and deep-rooted racial discrimination, police brutality and social inequality still existed.

103. During the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation, disinformation, hate speech and racist remarks by political and public figures had led to a surge of discrimination and hate crime against Africans and people of African descent, and Asians and people of Asian descent. It was time to commit to upholding human dignity and equality for the victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism, in particular people of African descent and the African diaspora.

104. Their respective countries welcomed the announcement of the International Decade for People of African Descent, the establishment of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent and the convening on 22 September 2021 of a high-level meeting on the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. They also welcomed the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 47/21, entitled “The promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers”, and called for its full implementation. Concrete measures were needed to accelerate momentum for the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Relevant States must adopt the necessary measures, as provided by national laws, to ensure the right of victims to seek just and adequate remedies, reparation and satisfaction to redress acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and to design effective measures to prevent the repetition of such acts.

105. **Mr. Sandoval Mendiola** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, in a pre-recorded video statement, said that, in the light of a pandemic that demonstrated the complex interconnectedness of the world, States must renew their commitment to multilateralism, international cooperation and human rights. COVID-19 had exacerbated major challenges to humanity, in particular to the most vulnerable, and had affected the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. In the current session, Mexico would therefore reaffirm through its actions the principles of the universality, interdependence, indivisibility and progressiveness of human rights. His country had benefited from its close collaboration with the universal system of human rights and, in that regard, reaffirmed its openness to international scrutiny.

106. His delegation had noted with concern in recent years an apparent polarization in the work of the Committee, which Mexico believed stemmed from a false dichotomy between national sovereignty and human rights. They were not opposing concepts: protecting human rights was a way of exercising

sovereignty. International cooperation would need to be promoted in order to strengthen the capacities of all States in that regard. The Committee was a space in which to advance the international human rights agenda. His delegation would continue to promote the rights of all persons in vulnerable situations, including women, children, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual persons, indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants, older persons, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants.

107. Mexico was proud to have a feminist foreign policy, which sought to put gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the centre of its diplomacy. Global recovery from the pandemic would only be effective if policies incorporated a gender and human rights approach. To conclude, Mexico reaffirmed its commitment to eradicating racial discrimination, xenophobia, hate speech, hate crimes and misinformation.

108. **Mr. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia) said that recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic required strengthened multilateral cooperation. As Chair of the Group of 20 during the previous year, Saudi Arabia had played a leading role in the global response to that pandemic. The country had also donated \$300 million in support of international efforts to tackle the pandemic and had supported international efforts to facilitate access to COVID-19 vaccines.

109. Saudi Arabia had continued to play a significant humanitarian and development role by helping the neediest countries. It was the largest donor of humanitarian and development aid in the Arab and Islamic world and among the top three globally, according to the Financial Tracking Service of the United Nations. It also topped the list of donors to Yemen, with total aid donated to that country exceeding \$18 billion over the six preceding years.

110. Saudi Arabia believed in women’s social, economic and political empowerment and that protection of their rights was important for development. To that end, Saudi Arabia had adopted legislative, labour and other reforms based on affirmative action principles. In 2020 and 2021, the efforts of Saudi Arabia in the area of women’s empowerment had been recognized in the “Women, Business and the Law” report issued by the World Bank. Saudi Arabia had also achieved equality between the sexes, particularly in the areas of education and health. Increasingly, Saudi women held advanced positions in the workplace and entered fields that had for decades only been open to men. The country’s efforts to protect

women's rights extended beyond the country's borders: since the beginning of 2021, the King Salman Humanitarian and Relief Centre had worked with the United Nations Population Fund on programmes to end gender-based violence, benefiting more than 65,000 women and girls in Yemen.

111. Saudi Arabia had enacted laws on children's rights that were based on Islamic sharia and were in line with international instruments. It had also created monitoring mechanisms to ensure the effective application of laws related to children's rights. In 2021, a national policy had been instituted to combat child labour in the country. Saudi Arabia had also contributed to programmes for children in countries such as Syria, Palestine and Yemen. Through a project implemented by the King Salman Humanitarian and Relief Centre, the country had rehabilitated more than 500 child soldiers and other children affected by armed conflict in Yemen.

112. **Mr. Lagatie** (Belgium) said that the crisis caused by the pandemic had accentuated inequalities, serving as a reminder of the importance of human rights. The best approach to ending the crisis was to guarantee the universality of human rights, a principle that obviously also applied to women and girls. No tradition, religion, cultural value or custom could ever justify gender discrimination, gender-based violence or violations of the rights of women and girls. In that context, his delegation continued to closely monitor the human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly that of women and girls. It was impossible to ensure the stability and prosperity of a country if half of its population was excluded.

113. The pandemic had led to an increase in violence against women and girls. To address that deplorable phenomenon, his delegation echoed the call of the Secretary-General to make gender equality central to all policies and goals. Equality and non-discrimination were core values at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals. Those principles were particularly relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual persons, who were at increased risk of living in poverty, suffering poor health, being excluded from quality education and experiencing violence and injustice.

114. On the twentieth anniversary of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, too many people were still discriminated against on the basis of their race, ethnicity or religion. States must work together to defeat the scourge of racism. Committed to the promotion of human rights at the national and international levels, Belgium was developing a national

action plan against racism and had presented its third universal periodic review. His country's efforts and commitment to resolving its own challenges were the best basis for conducting a credible and open international dialogue on human rights. In that context, his delegation had issued a standing invitation to the special procedure mandate holders and welcomed the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with them. Those States that had not yet done so were encouraged to do the same.

115. Although civil society played a key role in the promotion and protection of human rights, the space for critical voices to be heard was shrinking. Given the increase in the number of direct attacks on human rights defenders, it was crucial to ensure their protection.

116. **Mr. Dogan** (Croatia) said that, despite the challenges posed by the global pandemic, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, the rule of law and equality must underpin all aspects of global policies in building back better. That was also important in the light of other grave threats to humanity, such as climate change. Our Common Agenda, a warning call issued by the Secretary-General, was a sobering reminder that it was necessary to act together in finding solutions to pressing global challenges.

117. Croatia placed the rights of women and girls high on its agenda and, in that context, highly valued the Generation Equality Forum platform and was committed to the work of the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls. At the national level, Croatia was implementing initiatives aimed at addressing employment inequality, tackling gender-based stereotypes and providing better assistance to victims of gender-based violence. Through a multi-stakeholder advisory body, Croatia sought to actively include youth representatives and youth non-governmental organizations in political decision-making. In the context of the pandemic, efforts would be made to provide psychosocial assistance to help to empower children, adolescents and youth.

118. The pandemic had further deepened social inequalities. His country was in the final stages of adopting an umbrella strategic plan aimed at meeting the needs of socially vulnerable groups, including victims of domestic violence, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and youth not covered by the social security system, in order to provide them with equal access to quality social services.

119. Committed to strengthening respect for international humanitarian law, Croatia was actively engaged in implementing the provisions of an International Committee of the Red Cross resolution on

a road map towards better national implementation of international humanitarian law. At the international level, Croatia would continue to raise awareness of the impact of casualty recording, an integral part of efforts to monitor respect for international human rights and humanitarian law.

120. From its own experience, Croatia could testify that women not only bore a disproportionate burden during conflict, but that they also had a key role to play in preventing and ending wars, in peacebuilding and in post-conflict management. Croatia remained committed to the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda at the national, regional and global levels.

121. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan) said that, over the years, the General Assembly had adopted a series of resolutions in which it reaffirmed its abiding commitment to the right to self-determination, a legal and moral justification for the process of decolonization. However, through oppression, obfuscation and intransigence, India had long denied that right to the people of the illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Since 5 August 2019, India had proceeded to outright annexation of occupied Jammu and Kashmir in what its extremist rulers had ominously called a “final solution”. Since that date, by means of unilateral illegal action, India had imprisoned the entire Kashmiri political leadership; illegally detained 13,000 Kashmiri youth, torturing many of them; extrajudicially killed hundreds of Kashmiri boys; used rape as a weapon of war; violently stifled peaceful protests, blinding young children with pellet guns; imposed collective punishments by demolishing and burning entire neighbourhoods and villages; and curtailed the freedom of religion and expression. In blatant violation of Security Council resolutions and international law, India had introduced new and arbitrary domicile rules to transform the Muslim majority of Kashmir into a dispossessed and dispersed minority in their own homeland. No Indian soldier had been punished for those crimes.

122. The incidents described had been well documented in reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Government of Pakistan had also presented a dossier on 12 September 2021 providing concrete evidence of the crimes committed by India in Kashmir. His delegation awaited the implementation of Security Council resolutions prescribing a plebiscite to enable the Kashmiri people to exercise their right to self-determination. It also awaited global condemnation of the human rights violations committed by India in occupied Kashmir. Meanwhile, his delegation urged the General Assembly to ask India to accept the

recommendation of the High Commissioner to set up an inquiry commission to investigate the human rights violations in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

123. Expressions of racial hatred, religious supremacy and violent nationalism had escalated in several parts of the world. Islamophobia was a pernicious manifestation of racism and hate, which must be combated collectively. His delegation welcomed the declaration of the twentieth anniversary of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, in which Islamophobia was recognized as a contemporary form of racism. Islamophobia had become official policy in India, where Muslims were being disenfranchised, oppressed, evicted from their homes and killed with impunity. The Prime Minister of Pakistan had proposed that the Secretary-General convene a global dialogue on countering the rise of Islamophobia, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation had called for the designation of an international day to combat Islamophobia.

124. Peace and development were the best pathway to the promotion of human rights. In that regard, and as stated by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, China’s experience could become a source of guidance for all developing countries. His delegation fully supported President Xi Jinping’s global development initiative.

125. **Mr. Baror** (Israel) said that in 2020 the Committee had convened under a state of emergency, which meant that it had prioritized immediate needs over general concerns. A promise had been made to ensure that it was a temporary setback, enabling States to build back better. However, building back needed to happen in parallel with the war on COVID-19. The Committee was tasked with such topics as treating all people equally, preventing discrimination, creating equal opportunities and enabling every person to achieve their full potential. However, the United Nations was lacking a common framework for discussing the pressing issue of racism because some States were using the issue to serve their political agendas. Israel hoped that all Member States would find the courage to prioritize substance over politics and create a genuine foundation for combating racism in all its forms.

126. Although advancements had been made since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action, much more needed to be done. In that regard, Israel was committed to working towards achieving gender equality, eliminating gender gaps, ensuring a safe environment for all women and girls and promoting proper health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health services and rights. It was also essential to create an enabling environment for persons

with disabilities, removing any barriers preventing them from their full participation. Israel was eliminating such barriers through suitable planning and design, creative thinking and innovative technological solutions. It was ready to share its knowledge and experience and to learn from the best practices of others.

127. His delegation welcomed the growing space devoted to youth leaders and activists. Those leaders and activists were calling on States to hold relevant discussions on gender and other issues, including those affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual persons, and to prioritize its efforts in order to forge a better future for all.

128. **Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana) said that the theme of the Secretary-General's report on social development, which highlighted the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, coincided with his country's understanding of the role of social development policies and programmes in the reduction of poverty and the development of an inclusive society for all. Member States should preserve social spending to support national policies and strategies for social development, in order to recover better and get back on track towards implementing the 2030 Agenda.

129. A strong advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment, Ghana firmly believed that women should play a central role in national development. Given that legislative and constitutional instruments were key to the promotion of gender equality, his country was reviewing its national gender policy and implementation plan in line with the 2030 Agenda. To address discrimination against women, Member States should implement policies to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable livelihoods for women, especially those living in rural communities. Ghana was also implementing child welfare policies. In the area of education, a gendered approach had been adopted to address the specific needs of girls, including with regard to menstrual hygiene management. Member States must take decisive action to address the issue of the digital divide within and among countries.

130. The twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action provided an opportunity to build resilience and hope in addressing contemporary forms of racism. Concerned about the recent rise in discrimination, hate speech, stigmatization and related intolerance, including online, Ghana believed that priority should be given to the attainment of racial equality in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and that victims of racial inequality should be allowed to participate in consultations on human rights issues that affected them.

131. Dire socioeconomic conditions continued to heighten the vulnerability of people, in particular women, children and youth, exposing them to human rights violations, including trafficking in persons. Ghana looked forward to participating in the high-level meeting on the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in November 2021. His delegation fully supported the implementation of all core international human rights instruments, including the Declaration on the Right to Development, as a means to address the root causes of human rights violations.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.