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Chair: Mr. Doualeh (Djibouti)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Shahid** (Maldives) said that, as an executive arm of the General Assembly, the Committee had the ability to put in motion political, economic, humanitarian and social changes and deliver concrete improvements for the lives of people. Enhancing consensus and cooperation in the Committee's work was paramount to strengthening the trust of people in the United Nations system and multilateralism. The Committee must formulate and build on action-oriented policies to counter the spiralling social, humanitarian and cultural problems, including climate and social unrest, which had multiplied in the wake of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

2. The Committee must be unwavering in its commitments to uphold human rights, address gender equality, empower young people and tackle racism, inequality and injustice. During the high-level week, he had heard directly from women leaders about how to expand and strengthen gender equality. He intended to continue to listen to women and girls to learn what the General Assembly could do better.

3. It was imperative to hear from others outside the General Assembly. He had made a commitment to bring back the voices of civil society organizations, whose full and effective participation had been impeded by COVID-19 restrictions, and welcomed the commitment of the Chair of the Committee to holding an interactive informal meeting with civil society organizations during the current session.

4. The issue of vaccine equity and the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic had highlighted inequalities and caused social friction. He would champion affordable and non-discriminative access to vaccines and use every available platform to call for a recovery that was more sustainable and more equitable.

5. He intended to convene an informal high-level meeting in June 2022 to commemorate the first International Day for Countering Hate Speech. The meeting would build upon the recent adoption of a political declaration during the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

General debate (*continued*)

6. **Mr. Manalo** (Philippines) said that, while some countries had returned to some semblance of normality, Manila remained under general community quarantine. The COVID-19 pandemic had tested the limits of the

health-care system, and hundreds of Filipino health-care workers had died.

7. More than 80 per cent of the COVID-19 vaccines had gone to upper- and high-income countries. The serious inequality in access to vaccines must be addressed urgently. All States and stakeholders should treat vaccines as a global public good and ensure their equitable global distribution. The Philippines had contributed \$1.1 million to the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility and had participated in the Solidarity clinical trials led by the World Health Organization (WHO). His Government was committed to supporting multilateral approaches towards equitable vaccine access. More than 41 million vaccine doses had been administered in the Philippines, but more were needed.

8. The Philippines had long been a staunch advocate of the rights of women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and migrants. The Congress of the Philippines had enacted legislation to ensure the safety and security of women in public and private spaces. Agencies for combating trafficking in persons were actively working to protect women and children against abuse and exploitation, including online. Older persons and persons with disabilities benefited from social protection programmes and mental health initiatives. His delegation was ready to work towards a legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons. The Philippines recognized the positive contribution of migrants to the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, and the key roles played by them in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

9. His country reaffirmed its strong commitment to human rights. Implementation of the joint Philippines and United Nations human rights programme had begun through technical cooperation in six specific areas. Constructive engagement and genuine dialogue on enhancing human rights were of greater value than unilateral and politicized approaches.

10. **Mr. Rivera Roldan** (Peru) said his country would actively promote all initiatives for COVID-19 vaccines to be declared global public goods, with a view to ensuring fair and equitable access for everyone, without exception. Peru supported all multilateral efforts to reverse the increase in poverty and eliminate extreme poverty, with a view to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1. His delegation welcomed the call of the Secretary-General for a new global social contract, whereby public policies would be centred around empowering people and more inclusive and just societies created.

11. Peru reiterated its firm commitment to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the promotion of democracy and the rule of law as guarantees of internal peace. Gender equality must be achieved, women and girls must be empowered, and the eradication of all forms of violence and discrimination against them must be adequately and jointly addressed. The enormous digital divide among and within countries was of deep concern. The Committee should address the issue of ensuring access to communications technologies, in particular the Internet, which was essential in order for people to be able to exercise other rights. As a multicultural and multi-ethnic country, Peru was committed to full respect for the individual and collective human rights of indigenous peoples and persons of African descent and to the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

12. Combating transnational organized crime, including corruption, was a priority of his Government. The important agreements under the political declaration adopted at the special session of the General Assembly against corruption in June 2021 should be implemented.

13. Full respect for the rights of migrants, refugees and displaced persons should be guaranteed, and all forms of discrimination and xenophobia against them should be rejected. Cooperation frameworks that made provision, in the allocation of resources, for the needs of host countries, especially developing countries, in guaranteeing those rights should be promoted. Peru had welcomed 1.2 million migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with full respect for their rights, and was working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to enable them to participate productively in the economy and society. The international community should increase funding to support that migration process.

14. **Ms. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, women and girls in particular had been deprived of their rights. The closure of schools and universities had resulted in many children facing multiple inequalities. According to early estimates, 10 million more girls would be out of school than before the pandemic once all schools had reopened. Attacks on schools had continued, and school closures had led to an increased risk of schools being used for military purposes. Those developments underlined the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and, in particular, the Optional Protocol thereto on a communications procedure. Her delegation encouraged others to ratify the Convention and all the Optional Protocols thereto and to effectively implement them.

15. With regard to ongoing human rights violations, Liechtenstein would continue to call for the plight of the Rohingya people to be addressed and to support the ongoing legal cases before the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Her delegation commended the General Assembly for expressing grave concern about the actions taken in Myanmar on and after 1 February 2021 and for calling upon all Member States to prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar in its resolution [75/287](#).

16. The General Assembly must remain focused on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. National reconciliation and sustainable peace in that country would not be possible without justice and accountability for the most serious crimes committed during the conflict, and the work 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 was crucial in that regard. Liechtenstein continued to fully support the work of the accountability mechanisms of the Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court. It was disappointing that the Security Council continued to ignore calls from States, the United Nations system and victims for the situations in Myanmar and Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

17. Given the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law, and relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution [2593 \(2021\)](#), must be fully upheld. Those who effectively exercised control in the country must fully respect the rights and freedoms of women and girls, in particular the rights to high-quality education, work and freedom of movement. The United Nations must pay special attention to the situation of children in Afghanistan, including those affected by forced displacement. Liechtenstein had supported the humanitarian activities of the United Nations Children's Fund and UNHCR in Afghanistan through two contributions of CHF 100,000 each, and called upon others to also answer the flash appeal of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

18. **Mr. Seah** (Singapore) said that all countries should ensure affordable, fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and support the central role of WHO in coordinating international health responses.

19. His country was fully committed to upholding the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. His Government followed a human

rights approach grounded in strong adherence to the rule of law and sought to build a fair and inclusive society, tailored to the country's unique historical, social and cultural context. All countries had the sovereign right to determine their own legal and political systems. No country or group had the authority to impose its model of human rights on others. His delegation did not agree with country-specific resolutions and was not convinced that targeting the domestic policies of individual countries would help to resolve human rights issues.

20. Given that Singapore was a small island State with no natural resources, its survival and success depended on its people. His Government therefore spared no effort in promoting the well-being of vulnerable groups, including children, older persons, persons with disabilities and women. Holistic support for the health, social and development needs of children from low-income families was provided through government programmes. Women in Singapore enjoyed strong legal protection under laws such as the Women's Charter and the Penal Code. The year 2021 had been declared the year of celebrating Singaporean women, and national conversations on the development of Singaporean women had been launched.

21. Eliminating all forms of racism and racial discrimination was a key priority of his Government. The racial and religious harmony currently enjoyed by Singapore was the hard-won result of decades of work to build trust and understanding between the various communities in the country. The Government of Singapore was firmly committed to upholding its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and stood ready to work with all to overcome racism and intolerance.

22. It was incumbent on all Governments to remain accountable, exercise good governance and uphold the rule of law to improve the lives of people. The protection and promotion of human rights required the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals. For dialogue on human rights to advance, countries must appreciate each other's unique circumstances, engage constructively and maintain mutual respect.

23. **Mr. Foshanji** (Afghanistan) said that the people of Afghanistan, in particular women and girls, had been facing daily violations of their human rights and fundamental freedoms since the illegal seizure of power by the Taliban on 15 August 2021. The socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the country was worsening, and millions of people were in urgent need of help. His delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General for convening a high-level ministerial meeting

on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan on 13 September 2021 and to Member States for their generous pledges of humanitarian aid.

24. In the past few weeks, the Taliban had pursued a relentless campaign against civilians across the country, including in Panjshir Province, supported by multinational foreign terrorist fighters and foreign intelligence and military personnel. The Taliban had imposed a humanitarian blockade on the Province, committed war crimes and systematically killed innocent civilians, in clear violation of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

25. Despite the brutal suppression by the Taliban of peaceful demonstrations, the people of Afghanistan continued to struggle for their fundamental human rights and the preservation of the achievements of the past 20 years. Across the country, women and girls had been demanding their basic rights, including the rights to education and work. The Taliban had responded to those rightful demands by threatening, beating and detaining peaceful protesters and had banned girls from high school and prevented women from going to work. The extrajudicial killing of detainees and government officials and the hanging of people on the streets were deeply disturbing and must be stopped.

26. His delegation reiterated the repeated call of his country for the urgent dispatch of a United Nations fact-finding mission to assess the violations of human rights and hold the Taliban to account. The international community should continue to support the people of Afghanistan in reaching their aspirations of peace and prosperity. Progress would not be possible without an inclusive Government that represented all the people of Afghanistan, including women and minorities.

27. **Mr. Rae** (Canada) said that the importance of human rights and the rule of law as obligations to be embraced by all Member States was recognized in the Charter of the United Nations. Those obligations did not constitute foreign imposition or an expression of opinion by a given country. Any breach thereof must be remedied.

28. In Canada, 30 September 2021 marked the first-ever National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the establishment of which had been recommended by survivors of the residential school system. On that day, Canadians would reflect on the painful legacy of that colonial system, honour those who had been lost and engage meaningfully on reconciliation, as part of a broader Canadian effort to ensure that indigenous peoples' rights were fully respected and implemented. Canada had thus endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples without

qualification and was committed to its full and effective implementation, including the full and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in all United Nations bodies on issues affecting them.

29. The crisis unfolding in Afghanistan demanded the collective attention of the international community. A Taliban regime that did not respect international humanitarian law and uphold human rights, in particular the full rights of women and girls, would find itself increasingly isolated. Afghanistan should form a democratic and inclusive Government that was representative of all elements of Afghan society. Terrorism must not be allowed to take root, humanitarian actors must be able to operate without restrictions, and the Afghan people must be able to exercise their rights and freedoms.

30. Given the conflicts around the world, efforts must be redoubled to uphold human rights, including by preventing sexual and gender-based violence and supporting peacekeepers, especially women. It was deeply regrettable that the Government of Ethiopia had ordered United Nations peacekeepers to leave the country. The international community should work together to investigate the egregious human rights abuses in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Canada acknowledged the support shown by many of its international partners for the two Canadian citizens who had been held in China and, in that context, in developing and signing the Declaration against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations. The rule of law must be used to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms and foster peace and security, including in Belarus, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Myanmar, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

31. The principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should guide the global community towards a COVID-19 recovery based on human rights and gender equality.

32. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that that measures taken by her country in response to the COVID-19 pandemic respected the human rights of both citizens and residents. Special attention was given to those groups most affected by the pandemic and its repercussions, such as older persons, women, children and persons with disabilities. In addition, Qatar had taken steps to protect migrant workers by providing them with vaccines, monitoring workplace safety conditions and creating systems to ensure employer accountability.

33. Globally, Qatar had the second-highest rate of first-dose vaccinations against COVID-19 and the fifth-

highest rate of full vaccinations. The country's pandemic response had also taken account of the needs of women. In that regard, the Council of Ministers had recently approved part-time work in governmental organizations with a view to empowering working women through flexible scheduling and a better work-life balance. In that regard, her delegation supported the draft resolution submitted under the item on preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024. In order to support women's full participation at all judicial levels, Qatar had also drafted General Assembly resolution [75/274](#) proclaiming 10 March the International Day of Women Judges.

34. Qatar had not hesitated to support the efforts of States and international organizations to address the global health crisis, providing over \$140 million in 2020 to support the development of and equitable access to vaccines, especially in countries with the greatest need. Qatar looked forward to the opening of the United Nations House in Doha, which would contain offices for various United Nations agencies. Qatar had also provided support to the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region.

35. **Ms. Moldoisaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that, as a country that attached great importance to strengthening and promoting human rights, the rule of law and democracy, Kyrgyzstan had submitted its candidacy to the Human Rights Council for the period 2023–2025. During the current session of the General Assembly, her delegation would continue to call for the efficiency of the human rights treaty bodies and for cooperation with special procedures to be strengthened.

36. Given the importance of interreligious dialogue as a basis for rapprochement, all countries should take every possible measure to promote tolerance and respect for all religions and beliefs. International cooperation was important for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Kyrgyzstan remained firmly committed to supporting all United Nations efforts to promote national implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Migration was a priority area of the internal and foreign policies of her Government. Intergovernmental cooperation on migration issues should be enhanced, and all Member States should join the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

37. Countering the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitating the quick recovery of the global economy and taking joint measures to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals were among the top near-term priorities for the international community. International cooperation in combating and containing the COVID-19 pandemic must not be politicized. Vaccination and the provision of preventive care were the most effective measures. Kyrgyzstan supported the efforts of the Secretary-General, WHO and other United Nations agencies to overcome the pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences, and the activities of the COVAX Facility.

38. The protection of refugees was an essential part of her Government's migration policy. Kyrgyzstan had achieved excellent results in implementing the global campaign of UNHCR to address statelessness. In the light of the current situation in Afghanistan, her Government had decided to accept 500 Afghan students to study at universities in Kyrgyzstan, with a primary focus on the education of women and girls. Her Government was ready to provide humanitarian assistance to the citizens of Afghanistan, including the ethnic Kyrgyz of Big Pamir and Little Pamir.

39. There was no place for any form of discrimination, racism or xenophobia while the world was tackling the pandemic. Member States should enhance the coordination of public health and public financing and encourage national, regional and international cooperation to combat the pandemic.

40. **Mr. Kuzmin** (Russian Federation) said that, in the difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was more important than ever to engage constructively and share positive experiences in the implementation of the outcome documents of the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the subsequent special sessions of the General Assembly, and the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly.

41. A number of countries had decided to exploit the situation to achieve their opportunistic political and economic goals, resulting in increased pressure on countries that had already been weakened by illegal unilateral coercive measures, increased attempts to interfere directly in the internal affairs of sovereign States and increased criticism of States that were traditionally out of favour in the West because of the restrictions imposed by them on civil and political rights in order to protect public health. Meanwhile, the countries levelling such criticism were allowing violations of fundamental human rights to continue, racism and xenophobia to flourish and vaccine discrimination to emerge. The political leaders of those

countries, not medical professionals, had taken it upon themselves to determine the effectiveness of various COVID-19 vaccines. People who had received the "wrong" vaccines were subjected to widespread discrimination and restrictions.

42. WHO and its human rights bodies and mechanisms had not been able to respond adequately to the new challenges of the pandemic. The United Nations had become carried away with monitoring, whereas countries needed advisory and technical assistance.

43. Combating neo-Nazism and the glorification of Nazism and national socialism should unite rather than divide the international community. Any attempts to justify the atrocities of Nazis or to qualify collaboration with Nazis as a national liberation struggle were unacceptable. International human rights institutes and mechanisms should assess the discriminatory policies pursued by Ukraine and the Baltic States against minorities, in particular with respect to mother tongue-based education, and those countries should stop that practice.

44. The central role of the United Nations in international cooperation in addressing issues related to migration and refugees should be strengthened. The political and diplomatic settlement of conflicts was the only way to overcome the migration crisis.

45. His delegation welcomed the adoption by consensus of General Assembly resolution [75/282](#), which laid out a plan for the further work of the Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes. On 27 July 2021, Russia had submitted to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime a draft convention with a view to providing impetus for substantive, practical discussions within the Ad Hoc Committee.

46. His delegation consistently supported the central coordinating role of the United Nations in consolidating international efforts to combat global criminal challenges. The current global drugs control system, based on the three international drugs conventions, should be maintained, with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs playing a policymaking role and the International Narcotics Control Board carrying out monitoring.

47. **Mr. Hawke** (New Zealand) said that human rights were core to his Government's vision and commitment to building a safer, more prosperous and more sustainable future for all. New Zealand was committed to upholding international human rights commitments domestically and to protecting and promoting individual human rights globally.

48. The universal realization of human rights was facing unprecedented challenges, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, which was felt particularly acutely in the Pacific region. Given the interconnected nature of the modern world, it was more important than ever to work together with common purpose, with a focus on inclusion, equality, freedom of expression and well-being for all. The declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the recently released “Our Common Agenda” report of the Secretary-General (A/75/982) provided pathways for enhancing global cooperation to face contemporary challenges and realize the ambitions of leaving no one behind, placing women and girls at the centre and ensuring justice.

49. His country was deeply concerned about increasing human rights violations against women and girls in a number of countries, growing rates of domestic violence globally and reports of sexual violence, including as a weapon of conflict. The pandemic had served as a stark reminder that more must be done to end violence and discrimination against women and girls, improve education and health outcomes, protect sexual and reproductive health and rights globally, including by addressing preventable maternal mortality and morbidity, and promote the leadership and political participation of women.

50. More must also be done to enhance indigenous voices nationally and internationally, including at the United Nations. Indigenous peoples brought perspectives and values that contributed to the well-being and human rights of all. Democratic rights, including the freedoms of expression and assembly and media freedoms, must be re-emphasized. The important work of human rights defenders and civil society must be supported, including by enhancing inclusive participation.

51. **Ms. Kocyigit Grba** (Turkey) said that her Government had adopted a human rights-based approach in its response to the pandemic, making every effort to respond to the specific needs of vulnerable people, including women, children, older persons, refugees and persons deprived of their liberty. All citizens, as well as asylum seekers and refugees, had been receiving the necessary treatment and vaccines for COVID-19 free of charge. Efforts to address the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women and girls had become more important than ever as the world began to recover. COVID-19 response plans and recovery packages must take into account the gendered impacts of the pandemic.

52. The adverse effects of the pandemic on the well-being, development and protection of children, in

particular those in vulnerable situations, were of deep concern. Large movements of refugees and migrants across borders created further impediments to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. As the largest refugee-hosting country in the world, Turkey would continue its efforts to ensure the resilience and well-being of the more than 1 million Syrian children who had sought refuge in the country. Her Government would also continue to facilitate cross-border humanitarian operations, which provided a lifeline for millions of vulnerable people in north-western Syria.

53. The action plan on human rights launched by her Government in March 2021 was testament to its commitment to the universal promotion and protection of human rights. Turkey attached great importance to the work of all human rights bodies and the concerted efforts within the United Nations and its related agencies. It was disturbed by the obstacles that prevented millions of people across the world from fully enjoying their human rights, in particular the re-emergence of extremist political currents and ideologies, especially across Europe, which gave rise to new forms of racism, such as xenophobic nationalism, antisemitic movements and Islamophobia.

54. While her Government was developing relations with China in a way that was mutually beneficial and respected the territorial integrity and sovereignty of China, it attached importance to the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Uighur Turks and other Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China. In its ongoing dialogue with China, her Government emphasized the importance of enabling the Uighur Turks to live in prosperity, freedom and peace and to pass on their language, religion and culture to future generations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should make an unrestricted, meaningful and comprehensive visit to Xinjiang without delay.

55. The oppression by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories continued unabated. The people of Palestine deserved to live in freedom in their independent State within the 1967 borders. Regarding the conflict in Syria, which was in its eleventh year, Turkey called for the regime to be held accountable for its crimes against humanity and war crimes. In the light of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, her Government had stepped up its aid efforts and would continue to stand by the Afghan people, in particular women and girls, in preserving the gains made over the past two decades in the field of fundamental rights. Neighbouring countries should be supported to avoid another refugee crisis. The international community should take steps to investigate the atrocities amounting

to war crimes that had been witnessed in Libya and hold those responsible to account.

56. **Ms. Nour Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking on a point of order, said that her delegation was frustrated that the term “regime” continued to be used by some delegations with such harmful implications. The Chair should make it clear that such offensive behaviour could not continue. Her delegation did not agree that the Chair was unable to give a ruling on the issue. During the seventy-fourth session, the Chair had stated that the term would not be tolerated and had urged delegations to abide by the working methods of the United Nations and treat each other with due respect.

57. **Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had heightened the vulnerability of people who had already been facing dire humanitarian crises due to armed conflicts and disasters, exposed vulnerabilities in food systems, leading to increased food insecurity, malnutrition and famine-like conditions, and caused increased displacement, including on the African continent. Vaccine nationalism was short-sighted and would only prolong the pandemic, which would not end until it was eradicated in all countries. Vaccines must therefore be global public goods accessible to all. Unilateral coercive measures undermined the efforts of the countries subjected to them to effectively combat the pandemic and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, infringed on their sovereignty and defied international law, and should therefore be lifted.

58. At the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, a forward-looking political declaration had been adopted, demonstrating the renewed commitment of the international community to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It was ironic that racism continued to rear its ugly head in some of the countries that had regrettably chosen not to participate in the meeting. The people of Palestine continued to bear the brunt of the illegal policies and practices of Israel, which were universally condemned by the international community.

59. South Africa placed gender equality at the heart of its human rights system, in accordance with its Constitution. Women made up half of the executive branch of the Government. Access to education for girls and women had improved substantially. The World Economic Forum had ranked South Africa eighteenth out of 156 countries in its Global Gender Gap Index in 2021, as a result of his Government’s commitment to the achievement of gender equality by 2030.

60. The international community must respect international humanitarian and human rights law and apply humanitarian principles to ensure protection for those in need of humanitarian assistance. His delegation commended the countries that had hosted refugees despite having challenges of their own. South Africa hosted a significant number of refugees.

61. Trafficking in persons, illegal arms and drugs had increased, and the pandemic had driven cybercrimes and the black market in medical supplies. It was crucial to strengthen legal frameworks and penalties for such deplorable acts and adopt a more harmonized global approach to their criminalization to enable effective responses.

62. **Mr. Skoknic Tapia** (Chile) said that his Government had experimented with various restrictions on freedoms to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, while being aware that such restrictions must not under any circumstances affect human rights. Such an approach should form the ongoing premise for the work of the Organization, in particular the Third Committee, which had a special responsibility to give fresh impetus to international cooperation, solidarity and multilateralism, with the aim of promoting the mainstreaming of respect for human rights and a special focus on vulnerable groups, as a way to mitigate the effects of the crisis. The Committee, together with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, should be the cornerstones of the global architecture of international human rights law, helping to guide the work of the international community in that area. The Committee was also responsible for building consensus and developing the agreements necessary to confront the worrying trend of the erosion of democracy.

63. To prepare for the future, deep reflection was needed on the interplay between the pandemic-related restrictions and human rights. When new crises emerged, the value of democracy, dialogue, cooperation and solidarity must be emphasized as key tools for the defence of the universality of human rights. Since 2020, his country had been advocating a binding global instrument for multidimensional pandemic preparedness and response. Its efforts had led to the adoption by WHO of a resolution on strengthening global preparedness for pandemics, which marked the beginning of a process of reflection on the successes and errors of the international community in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The future instrument resulting from that process should provide new multilateral tools that would help to prepare for future crises.

64. The universality of human rights strengthened the preventive capacity of the multilateral system, which

benefited considerably from the participation of civil society, the private sector, academia and all relevant actors. Chile was fully committed to democracy, the rule of law and human rights and would continue to work with the Committee and other multilateral bodies to promote and protect human rights.

65. **Mr. Massari** (Italy) said that the rapid development of digital technologies could offer great opportunities but also pose new challenges. The protection and promotion of human rights must be ensured both online and offline, and within the private sector.

66. Promoting gender equality and combating all forms of violence against women and girls were high on his Government's agenda. The recent developments in Afghanistan were jeopardizing hard-won gains in women's rights. Afghan women and girls deserved to live in safety and dignity and to fully enjoy their rights to education, work, freedom of movement and freedom of expression.

67. His Government was engaged in combating multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Its efforts to protect and promote the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons were aimed at removing all barriers preventing them from fully enjoying their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights.

68. Italy deeply valued the role of civil society and encouraged its full and meaningful participation, as well as that of human rights defenders, within the United Nations system and beyond, without reprisals or any restrictions on freedom of expression. As a member of the Media Freedom Coalition, Italy placed freedom of the press and the safety of journalists high on its agenda.

69. His Government was staunchly committed to ensuring the full and meaningful participation of young people in global decision-making. Italy was currently hosting an event to give young people from around the world the opportunity to draft concrete proposals for the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

70. Italy would continue to support human rights, in cooperation with the United Nations system, and the work of UNHCR and the special procedure mandate holders.

71. **Ms. Bait** (Italy), speaking as a youth delegate, in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the global pandemic had highlighted the crucial role of digital skills but had also exacerbated the digital divide. All human rights that existed offline must be protected

online. The digital divide between countries, between urban and rural areas and between young and older persons, and the digital gender divide must be reduced. Initiatives to include and empower young people around the world in decision-making must be promoted. The ethical use of technologies must be encouraged, and the current generation must be trained to be responsible learners in the digital age.

72. **Mr. Demo** (Italy), speaking as a youth delegate, in a pre-recorded video statement, said that school systems must be adapted to the complexity of the new world. Educational methods needed to take into consideration the evolving skills required, including digital and other soft skills. Promoting teamwork led to greater acceptance of others' ideas and the creation of a democratic environment. The ability to manage emotions and work under pressure was vital to developing healthy relationships with others. Innovative educational methods, such as peer education, should be promoted to reach that goal.

73. **Mr. Hauri** (Switzerland) said that the disastrous effects of climate change and environmental degradation on human rights required urgent responses from the international community. At the current session of the Human Rights Council, Switzerland, together with Costa Rica, Maldives, Morocco and Slovenia, would present a draft resolution on the recognition of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

74. Respect for human rights should be at the heart of measures to address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the global recession, which had disproportionately affected women. His country was committed to ensuring that the participation of women and girls was an integral part of efforts to rebuild from the pandemic.

75. In that regard, access to information and respect for the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly were also of vital importance. His country was deeply concerned about the censorship of online information channels, violent crackdowns on peaceful protests and reprisals against journalists and human rights defenders. Civil society and free media made an essential contribution to tackling current challenges and must be allowed to carry out their work effectively. Switzerland would continue to advocate respect for the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and the protection of journalists and human rights defenders.

76. Human rights must be protected both online and offline, and international law should be applied in the digital space. States should abandon measures such as

shutting down Internet networks, which not only violated the freedom of expression, but also had serious consequences for the rights to access to health care, education and basic economic services.

77. Combating impunity remained a priority of his Government. Switzerland reaffirmed its full support for the International Criminal Court and international accountability mechanisms, which played a key role in achieving justice for victims, preventing serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and fostering reconciliation and sustainable peace. His Government remained committed to ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all matters relating to peace and security.

78. **Ms. Bassols Delgado** (Spain) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the need to continue to give special attention to vulnerable persons, who had been particularly affected by the negative consequences of the health, social and economic crisis. Women and girls continued to face inequalities, discrimination and gender-based violence in many parts of the world, including Afghanistan. Having established gender equality as a priority of its foreign policy, her Government had co-led the action coalition on economic justice and rights of the Generation Equality Forum and had participated in the development of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, launched by the Forum to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

79. Emphasizing the interrelation between the rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and other rights, such as the right to health, was of the utmost importance in the context of pandemics. The rights to safe drinking water and sanitation were indispensable in the control and prevention of infectious diseases. Their realization should be placed at the heart of any plan for responding to the current global health challenges.

80. The discrimination and violence suffered by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and the lack of respect for their rights should be cause for concern. While notable progress had been made towards equality globally, the reverse was true in some individual countries. The international community should not remain indifferent and leave it to the civil society organizations in those countries to fight for diversity and inclusion. The Committee was the platform for supporting those persons and condemning violations and abuses against them, working together with the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

81. **Mr. Darius Nzangi Mutua** (Kenya) said that the past 18 months had demonstrated that global challenges required strengthened multilateralism and a rejuvenated spirit of unity. Vaccine equity and unhindered access to vaccines for developing and least developed countries must be ensured.

82. Inclusive development was key to achieving the 2030 Agenda. The effective involvement of women, young people, children, persons with disabilities and older persons lay at the heart of achieving transformative change. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls were of fundamental importance.

83. His Government had developed a blueprint to address the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, with economic strategies targeting women. It was investing in young people, job creation and poverty alleviation through a youth enterprise fund and programmes to give young Kenyans access to digital job opportunities. Great strides had been made towards enhanced access to, completion of and gender parity in basic education. International cooperation was needed to guarantee access to inclusive education through digital technologies for developing and least developed countries.

84. With universal health care as one of its main strategies, his Government had implemented major policy and administrative reforms in the health sector, with the aim of ensuring equal access to high-quality and affordable medical coverage by 2022. A universal health-care programme had been piloted in four counties, facilitating access to health services for millions of people. Investments made under the first phase of the programme had helped tremendously in responding to COVID-19 and combating HIV, malaria and tuberculosis.

85. His Government had established programmes to help low-income households, women, orphans, vulnerable children, young people and persons with disabilities to obtain access to funds. Debt relief should be provided to developing and middle-income countries to enable them to provide social protection services to their citizens and stay on course to implement the 2030 Agenda.

86. His Government was committed to upholding the principles of international refugee protection. All human rights, including the right to development, were universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. Kenya remained committed to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and continued to support nations seeking self-determination and independence. Development could not occur without

sustainable peace, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals must therefore be accelerated.

87. **Ms. Maas** (Netherlands), in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the COVID-19 pandemic – the first of three global threats to women’s health – had shown that gender, ethnicity, lifestyle factors and socioeconomic circumstances were crucial determinants of health. The heavy burden of the pandemic in low-income countries and among ethnic minorities had affected women in particular. The rise in domestic violence had created a new pandemic within the COVID-19 crisis. Economic independence for women was therefore critical.

88. Another major threat to women’s health was cardiovascular disease, which had been the number one killer of women worldwide for more than a decade. Despite the progress in scientific knowledge on sex and gender issues in heart disease, women were still understudied, underrecognized, underdiagnosed and undertreated in cardiology care. The current practice, which resulted in higher morbidity and mortality rates among women, must change in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 5 by 2030.

89. The third threat to women’s health was the worldwide climate crisis. Higher global temperatures affected almost all diseases and harmed more vulnerable populations and poorer communities. Climate change affected biodiversity and the food system, giving rise to new health threats. All health professionals needed to engage in the global response to climate change.

90. To enhance gender equality in health care, women must be taken more seriously as patients and more gender-sensitive strategies must be implemented in all fields of medical care. Women’s health should be included in educational programmes for students and health professionals. Given that more than 70 per cent of all health-care workers were female, women should be represented in more leading positions at all levels of the health-care system. Women were as important as men in creating the innovative culture needed to face the current global pandemic.

91. **Mr. Simbyakula** (Zambia) said that his delegation took note of the concerns raised in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/76/181) with regard to the global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the advancement of social development. Twenty-five years after the Summit, the commitments to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions and to promote full and productive employment seemed far-fetched.

92. His Government continued to implement policies aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change and the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and social protection programmes targeting poor and vulnerable people, with a focus on reducing poverty, hunger and vulnerability among women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. Existing social protection programmes were currently being streamlined to make them more effective and efficient, and their scope was being broadened in an effort to reach more vulnerable communities. Agricultural transformation would be undertaken with a view to ending hunger and improving nutrition. A national policy on ageing had been developed to address the interrelated issues of old age, including poverty, health care, nutrition, income security, transport and living environments.

93. The peaceful atmosphere in Zambia had continued to attract people from neighbouring countries. Three refugee settlements had been established in the country, and Zambia currently hosted a total of 98,976 refugees, asylum seekers and other persons of concern. His Government, with support from development partners, had continued to offer social services to persons of concern and remained committed to ensuring their access to basic services. The Government’s scheme for the integration and resettlement of refugees who had chosen to make Zambia their home continued to be implemented.

94. Given the importance of human and social development in maintaining a healthy and skilled population, his Government would work to improve access to education, health care, social protection and water and sanitization facilities. His Government was committed to ensuring the equal access of girls to education by addressing the challenges faced by female learners.

95. **Ms. Panteli** (Cyprus) said that Turkey had been committing egregious violations of individual and collective human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cyprus since 1974. The fate and whereabouts of 992 of the 2,002 missing persons had yet to be determined. Meanwhile, Turkey refused to provide valuable information, including on the deliberate relocation of remains, from its military archives. Turkey should grant the Committee on Missing Persons unimpeded access to all areas for excavations and exhumations. States should provide any information relevant to the missing persons to the Committee on Missing Persons without delay.

96. One third of Greek Cypriots had been forcibly displaced as a result of the armed aggression of Turkey and they continued to be denied the right to return to their ancestral homes and properties, which were being

unlawfully exploited, including by illegal settlers. Since the invasion, Turkey had sought to alter the demographic character of Cyprus through the transfer of thousands of illegal settlers from the mainland, which was a war crime under international law. The enclaved Greek Cypriots living under Turkish military rule continued to endure daily violations of their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, and their numbers had been drastically reduced through persistent harassment, intimidation and discrimination. Such actions were part of a deliberate plan by Turkey to alter the demographic composition and historical character of the island, in line with its strategic goal of partitioning Cyprus.

97. The preservation of cultural and religious heritage was an imperative for the protection of human rights. The glaring disregard of Turkey for cultural and religious monuments was especially evident in the occupied areas of Cyprus, where the rich cultural, archaeological and religious heritage had been looted, destroyed and vandalized. Despite the colossal efforts by the Government and the Church of Cyprus to recover the more than 50,000 religious and cultural treasures that had been stolen, the whereabouts of the vast majority of them remained unknown.

98. Turkey should rescind its decision to open the fenced area of Varosha in direct violation of relevant Security Council resolutions and in disregard of the repeated calls by the Council for Varosha to be transferred to United Nations control.

99. Her delegation would continue to draw attention to the human rights violations committed by Turkey in Cyprus until they had been redressed, which was a prerequisite for the achievement of a just, comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the Cyprus problem, on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions and in accordance with human rights standards.

100. **Mr. Salovaara** (Finland) said that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the enjoyment of human rights had been especially severe for women and girls, in particular those with disabilities, those living in rural areas, indigenous women and girls and women human rights defenders, and for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons. In building back better from the pandemic, women must be placed front and centre in decision-making to ensure that the rights and needs of women and girls were considered.

101. The rapid deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan had highlighted the importance of protecting the human rights of all persons, in particular women and girls. The enjoyment by women and girls in

Afghanistan and all other countries of sexual and reproductive health rights, including the right to bodily autonomy and comprehensive sexuality education, must also be ensured. Sustainable development would not be possible without respect for the fundamental right of all persons to make decisions regarding their own bodies.

102. Finland was a steadfast supporter of a stronger and inclusive multilateral system and universal and binding human rights. A comprehensive and progressive vision of human rights should be developed with the full, equal and meaningful participation of all people in all their diversity. The active participation of civil society and human rights defenders in all United Nations processes must be ensured. Efforts to engage young people both within and outside the United Nations should be enhanced.

103. **Ms. Leppälaakso** (Finland), speaking as a youth delegate, in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had led to an exponential growth in gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation, violent homicides against transgender women and systematic rape. Member States that had once been considered progressive had passed laws depriving women and girls of their right to make decisions regarding their own bodies. Young women and girls were exposed to violence and harassment not only in the physical world, but also online.

104. **Mr. Birjulin** (Finland), speaking as a youth delegate, in a pre-recorded video statement, said that those who had violated the rights of women and girls must be held to account. Gender-based violence and harassment, both online and offline, must be criminalized. All Member States should respect and ratify the international agreements for the protection of the rights of women and girls and implement national action plans on women and peace and security and on youth and peace and security.

105. **Ms. Theofili** (Greece) said that her delegation supported the call of the Secretary-General for the world to take immediate action to bridge the great divides. The only way to deal with the climate divide was through common and coordinated efforts. Regarding the gender divide, the sooner intersectional gender equality was made a common reality, the sooner peace, security, social justice and sustainable development would be achieved. Bridging the peace divide required democracy, the rule of law, freedom of speech and media freedom. Greece had always been a staunch supporter of the freedom of expression and the right to accurate information as the means for responsible citizenship.

106. Following the military invasion and illegal occupation of almost 37 per cent of the territory of

Cyprus by Turkey in 1974, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Cyprus, including displaced persons, enclaved persons, legal owners of property in the occupied part of Cyprus and relatives of missing persons, had been consistently violated. A significant number of Greek citizens remained missing and almost 200,000 Greek Cypriots were internally displaced. The problem had been further exacerbated by the recent announcement by Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leaders in July 2021 of the reopening of a part of the fenced-off area of Varosha, contrary to the relevant Security Council resolutions and the statement by the President of the Council of 23 July 2021 (S/PRST/2021/13), calling for the immediate reversal of that course of action and the reversal of all steps taken in relation to Varosha since October 2020. Since the invasion, Turkey had pursued a systematic policy of colonizing the occupied part of Cyprus, with the aim of changing the demographic composition. The measures adopted by Turkey in recent years related to the educational and religious rights of the enclaved persons had unfortunately come too late. The widespread looting and destruction of the cultural and religious heritage of Cyprus in the occupied territory was another issue of concern.

107. **Ms. Sieng** (Cambodia) said that, as a State party to eight of the nine core United Nations human rights conventions, Cambodia had worked closely with various human rights mechanisms, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the universal periodic review and treaty bodies, reflecting its commitment to the promotion and protection of the human rights of its people.

108. The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda would contribute significantly to economic well-being, social protection and the improvement of human rights in all aspects. Financing for development from donors and development partners was much needed for Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

109. Human rights should be promoted and protected in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, following an approach based on genuine dialogue and the principles of non-confrontation, non-politicization and non-selectivity, and taking into account the national particularities of each country. Double standards and politicization under the pretext of human rights must be avoided. Unilateral trade, economic and financial sanctions continued to be imposed on developing countries, violating human rights, running counter to the spirit of the Charter and hindering development efforts. Such unilateral coercive measures must be stopped without any conditions.

110. Her Government had spared no effort in combating the COVID-19 pandemic and protecting the lives of the Cambodian people. About 80 per cent of the population was expected to have been vaccinated by no later than November 2021. Cambodia had donated millions of masks, medical supplies and funding to a number of countries in the region.

111. Her Government would continue to work with the private sector, development partners and civil society organizations to ensure that the socioeconomic development of the country benefited all women and girls. The participation of women in decision-making had gradually increased in the past two decades as a result of the commitment and affirmative policies of the Government. Having ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, Cambodia would make every effort to protect and promote children's rights. Cambodia also reaffirmed its commitment to making steady progress in realizing the rights of persons with disabilities.

112. **Ms. Squeff** (Argentina) said that, in the light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission for Social Development had become a crucial forum for sharing good practices and tracking progress towards poverty eradication, full employment and social integration.

113. Ensuring the recognition and effective enjoyment of the rights of all women, girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons was a priority of her Government, as reflected in its establishment of the Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity. The Government had also adopted the Abortion Legalization Act, aimed at protecting the health and lives of women and persons with other gender identities who were able to gestate, an Act on comprehensive health care during pregnancy and early childhood, an Act establishing a quota of 1 per cent for the employment of transvestite, transexual and transgender persons in government agencies and a Decree on the recognition of non-binary identities in national identity documents. Argentina served as the Vice-Chair of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and of the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women, and as the Co-Chair of the lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) Core Group. Her Government had joined the Generation Equality Forum and co-led the action coalition on bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

114. A universal, specific and binding legal instrument that ensured the full enjoyment of the rights of older persons was needed. The Open-ended Working Group

on Ageing was an important multilateral platform for reflection on measures to enhance the protection of the rights of older persons.

115. In the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, her delegation welcomed the political declaration adopted on 22 September 2021 and called for progress in combating all the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

116. As part of its efforts to promote the universalization of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Argentina was running, together with France, a third campaign to encourage more States to ratify the Convention, with the aim of reaching 100 ratifications by 2025.

117. **Ms. Juul** (Norway) said that democratic norms continued to be challenged, with targeted measures used by Governments to silence critical voices, restrict access to information, limit space for civil society, clamp down on peaceful protests and undermine the rights of minorities. Norway commended the efforts of individuals and groups to stand up for human rights, democracy and equality and speak out against discrimination and intolerance despite the difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and echoed their calls for a more inclusive response. Adequate protection of human rights defenders must be ensured as part of recovery efforts.

118. The explosive increase in gender-based violence and the lack of access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health services, witnessed during the pandemic would have serious and long-lasting effects for women and girls. Recovery efforts must therefore have a gender perspective and include the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. Raising awareness of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities was an important part of building back better and more inclusively. Global response and recovery efforts must be based on human rights, the rule of law and democracy, with a strong and efficient United Nations at their heart. Embracing a comprehensive vision of human rights was the most effective way to continue to combat the pandemic and build a better future for all.

119. **Mr. Fifield** (Australia) said that, in a year of continued turbulence, the international community must redouble its commitment to the protection and promotion of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. His country was particularly concerned by the reversals of rights and fundamental freedoms during the COVID-19 pandemic; the use of the pandemic as a

pretext for restricting the essential characteristics of open and free societies; the reprisals against, and increased stigmatization of, politically targeted groups, such as human rights defenders, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and indigenous peoples; and the shrinking of civic space and muting of civil society. Member States and the United Nations should facilitate the participation of civil society, including by reducing barriers to the participation of indigenous peoples in the United Nations.

120. Further causes for concern included the increasing threat to the right to freedom of expression, both online and offline, around the world; the use of arbitrary arrests, detention and sentencing to influence State-to-State relations; and the use of the pandemic as a pretext to restrict consular access to people in detention. His country would continue to support international efforts to deter such practices. Australia continued to advocate the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances.

121. Gender-responsive recovery efforts were critical to regaining lost ground. Member States should place all vulnerable populations at the centre of their recovery efforts. Recent global events had highlighted the ongoing challenges confronted by women and girls in conflict zones. His Government, through its second national action plan on women and peace and security, was committed to promoting the meaningful participation of women in peace and security and reducing sexual and gender-based violence.

122. In recovering from the pandemic, a strong multilateral human rights system was needed to ensure accountability, transparency and the continued protection and promotion of human rights. His delegation rejected attempts to reframe the consensus on international human rights law; such attempts undermined the obligations of States to protect and promote human rights.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

123. **Ms. Nour Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that it seemed that certain countries continued to use the Committee as a platform to practice political hypocrisy and promote a misguided approach to the Syrian issue in order to prolong the country's humanitarian crisis. Instead of shedding crocodile tears and levelling accusations, those countries should instead work to change subversive policies such as the coercive unilateral measures imposed by the United States and the European Union on Syria and its people. Such measures had had catastrophic humanitarian consequences for Syrians, hindering their access to food, medicine, fuel and other basic necessities, and

undermined the humanitarian and relief operations carried out by the United Nations and other organizations.

124. She wished to inform the delegate of the European Union in particular that the Syrian people were suffering greatly and that they were real people who needed food and medicine. She had been born and raised in Syria and had been a university student at the outbreak of the war. Her family still lived in Syria and suffered every day as a result of those measures. The delegates should, for a moment, forget their role as diplomats and try to adopt the mindset of ordinary human beings, imagining how it would feel to not be able to help their own family members in such a situation.

125. Some delegates had mentioned cross-border humanitarian access. In line with Security Council resolution 2585 (2021), humanitarian activities should promote development and reconstruction projects in order to ensure the delivery of essential services in areas such as education and health. After a long period of obstruction by the Turkish occupation forces, aided by members of terrorist organizations, a World Food Programme caravan, approved months in advance by the Syrian Government, had managed to travel via road from Aleppo to the city of Sarmada in north-west Syria. That operation had been successful, as noted by the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths.

126. Turkish practices had had destroyed Syrian infrastructure and had cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians. Her delegation had cited many times the example of the Turkish Government's crime of cutting off the water from more than 1 million Syrian civilians in the city of Hassakah. Data and satellite images testified to that on a daily basis, and United Nations experts had been sent to the area and had observed it. Turkey had used water as a weapon to exert pressure not only on Syria, but also on Iraq; according to a Turkish statement, "Iraq has oil; we have water". Delegates would remember that water had been used as a weapon against Syria 30 years previously as well.

127. In 1516, the Ottoman Empire had invaded Syria. The Syrians, however, known for their resilience and determination, had overthrown that Empire in 1916 after 400 dark years of occupation.

128. **Mr. Pilipenko** (Belarus) said that it was inappropriate to refer to a sovereign State as a "regime". The delegation of the European Union should respect the Charter of the United Nations and adhere to the civilized principles of equal and respectful dialogue. The allegations against Belarus were unfounded and purely politically motivated. His delegation categorically

rejected the attempts of a certain group of States, which fancied themselves as paragons of human rights, to make biased assessments of the human rights situations in other countries. In the face of the gross interference in the internal affairs of Belarus and the hybrid war being waged against it, his Government would adopt all measures necessary to protect its sovereignty.

129. Regarding the accusations that Belarus was manipulating migrants, his country would respond to them openly, unlike its neighbours, who introduced states of emergency to make it easier for them to hide the truth from journalists. A UNHCR delegation had recently concluded a visit to Belarus at the invitation of the Government. His country was not the cause of the migration problem in the European Union and rejected the attempts to shift responsibility for that problem onto Belarus. By seeking to accuse Belarus of manipulating migrants, the European Union was itself manipulating the issue.

130. **Mr. Dai Bing** (China) said that the representatives of the European Union and Canada were meddling in the internal affairs of China and had made groundless accusations based on false information and prejudice. The aim of the efforts in Xinjiang was to counter violent terrorism and separatism in accordance with Chinese laws and the wishes of the people of all ethnic groups. For more than 4.5 years, there had been no cases of violent terrorism in Xinjiang. The region enjoyed social stability and economic prosperity, and the protection of the human rights of the local people had improved. The doors of Xinjiang were open to the world. Nearly 200 million Chinese and foreign tourists travelled there every year, and more than 100 delegations comprising more than 1,600 United Nations officials, foreign diplomats, journalists and members of religious groups had visited the region. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had visited China eight times. Such visits should be conducted in a friendly manner, not as an investigation.

131. Hong Kong belonged to China. Since the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Act, society had returned to normal. No amount of smearing of the Act would halt the trend of Hong Kong moving from chaos to governance and prosperity. Nevertheless, a few countries had chosen to politicize human rights issues and practise double standards. His delegation wondered why those countries had never addressed their own problems, such as racial discrimination and xenophobia, violations of the rights of refugees and migrants, and abuse of indigenous children. They targeted and humiliated developing countries on account of their human rights situations, but never expressed concern about the human rights

violations committed by their allies, such as the indiscriminate killing of civilians in overseas military operations, or the proliferation of guns and police violence in allied countries. His delegation could not understand why those countries prevented their Beijing-based diplomats from visiting Xinjiang upon invitation while basely accusing the authorities in that region of so-called “genocide”.

132. It was completely wrong for the representative of Canada to refer to the cases of two Canadian citizens in total disregard of the facts and laws. Chinese citizen Meng Wanzhou, Deputy Chair of Huawei, a Chinese private company, had recently returned to China after 1,028 days of illegal detention in Canada, which constituted political persecution. The United States and Canada had detained her not for legal reasons but to suppress Chinese hi-tech companies and obstruct scientific and technological development in China. The two Canadian citizens had committed crimes in China, endangering national security, and had admitted guilt. China was governed by the rule of law, and everyone was equal before the law.

133. Canada should refrain from distorting the facts and stop repeating its mistakes. Historically, Canada had plundered indigenous lands, killed indigenous people and eliminated indigenous culture. Recently, the bodies of hundreds of indigenous children who had died from abuse at boarding schools had been discovered. The European Union had discriminated against gypsies, Jews, Asians and Muslims and illegally blocked refugees and migrants, leading to thousands of people drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. Justice must be served. Those countries should return to the right track of dialogue and cooperation and stop fabricating lies and creating confrontation.

134. **Mr. Kim Nam Hyok** (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) said that his delegation categorically rejected all the accusations made by the representative of the European Union against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The so-called human rights issues fabricated by the hostile forces had never existed and could never be allowed to exist in his country. The continuous attempts of the European Union to forcibly adopt a draft resolution against his country proved that the hostile forces were still seeking to tarnish the image of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and undermine its social system. The accusations against his country had nothing to do with the genuine promotion and protection of human rights and were the impure product of a political plot. The European Union was fraught with serious human rights violations, such as racial discrimination, Islamophobia and xenophobia, and should address the serious human rights issues on

its own land, rather than taking issue with the human rights situations in other countries.

135. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that the representative of Greece had presented a selective, one-sided interpretation of history and the current state of affairs. In 1963, Turkish Cypriots had been forced out of the government institutions and legislative and judiciary bodies of Cyprus, and the atrocities committed against them were well documented. Subsequently, in 1964, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus had been deployed. Over the next 10 years, 180,000 Turkish Cypriots had been displaced and forced to live in scattered enclaves. The only occupation on the island, therefore, was the 57-year-long occupation by the Greek Cypriot administration. Turkish Cypriots and the Government of Turkey had demonstrated their political will for a solution, most recently in 2017, during the Conference on Cyprus in Crans-Montana, Switzerland.

136. The Turkish Cypriot authorities were making every effort to facilitate the work of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus. Hundreds of Turkish Cypriots had gone missing in the period from 1963 to 1974. Attempts to exploit a humanitarian issue for political propaganda purposes undermined the excellent work of the Committee. Turkey had contributed \$1.5 million to the Committee since 2006.

137. To address the cultural heritage issues, Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots had established a joint technical committee, which had carried out several significant projects related to the sites on both sides of the island.

138. Varosha lay within the borders of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The steps taken by the Turkish Cypriot authorities were aimed at benefiting the former owners of property in Varosha and could improve interpersonal relations on the island. Some Greek Cypriot former inhabitants of Varosha supported the ongoing process, as it would allow them to reclaim their property or receive some form of remedy. The immovable property commission in charge of considering property claims in Varosha provided an effective domestic remedy for such claims and was recognized by the European Court of Human Rights. Any steps taken by the Turkish Cypriot authorities would not infringe on property rights in Varosha.

139. The baseless allegations made by the Greek Cypriot administration would be answered by its Turkish Cypriot counterpart, whose voice unfortunately could not be heard in the Committee.

140. There were no human rights lessons to be learned from the representative of a regime that had massacred

and tortured the Syrian people for more than 10 years. Her delegation categorically rejected the lies and delusional allegations, which were merely a desperate attempt to divert attention from the destruction that the regime continued to inflict on its own people. Despite its shameless efforts to distort reality, the regime would be held accountable for its war crimes and crimes against humanity.

141. **Ms. Maille** (Canada) said that, by signing the Charter of the United Nations, all Member States had made a commitment to the universality of human rights. Her Government would continue to promote respect for the rights of people everywhere and to speak up when it witnessed human rights violations, as it did in Xinjiang. China should allow immediate, meaningful and unfettered access to Xinjiang for independent human rights observers.

142. Her Government continued to value judicial independence and the rule of law. A few days earlier, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, who had been imprisoned by the Government of China, had been welcomed back to Canada. Subsequently, her Government had applied both national and international law in response to a request for extradition. Canada continued to oppose the way in which those two individuals had been treated. They had not benefited from the due process, transparency and judicial independence that Ms. Meng had enjoyed in Canada. At the end of her detention, Ms. Meng had thanked the court and Canada for upholding the rule of law. Her delegation was grateful to the many international partners who had stood with the Canadian citizens and to those who had helped to develop the Declaration against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations.

143. The rights of indigenous peoples had been an area of profound national reflection in Canada owing to the greater awareness of past failures and the persistent challenges faced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. In Canada, 30 September 2021 marked the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, which had been established to honour the First Nations, Inuit and Métis survivors and their families and communities. Reconciliation required all Canadians to understand the pain of indigenous peoples and to work in partnership on the path forward. It also required a formal public commemoration of the tragic events related to Indian residential schools. In response to the call to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, her Government had adopted laws on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Canada was committed to continuing on the path towards reconciliation.

144. **Ms. Ioannou** (Cyprus) said that it was important to accord due respect to all Member States and to address them by their proper names. Cyprus was the only recognized State on the island. The human rights violations in Cyprus undeniably stemmed from the invasion and ongoing occupation by Turkey. The Government of Turkey should stop inventing pretexts to divert the discussion, rewrite history or abrogate responsibility.

145. Human rights violations could not be normalized because they had been taking place for a long time, and past events could not continue to be used as justification for sustaining such violations. The intercommunal friction that had led the Government of Cyprus to request the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in 1964 had affected both communities and all groups on the island. Turkish Cypriots had not been forced out of government institutions, but rather had unilaterally withdrawn at the behest of the Government of Turkey, which continued to use the Turkish Cypriot community as a vehicle for partition and separatism. The claims of isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community were a smokescreen for the recognition of a separatist entity that had been condemned as illegal by the Security Council. The failure to reach a comprehensive settlement in the peace process was due only to the insistence of Turkey on retaining the anachronistic Treaty of Guarantee and its unfounded interpretation thereof.

146. The expansionist and separatist policies of the Government of Turkey were evident in its unilateral decision to reopen Varosha in utter defiance of Security Council resolutions. Such a decision constituted a deliberate attempt to alter the agreed basis for a solution to the Cyprus problem and was part of a plan to make the division of the island permanent. States responsible for wrongful acts were under an enduring obligation to make full reparations, and no other arrangements could be invoked to absolve a State of such responsibility or its obligations under international law.

147. Despite bicomunal work to restore destroyed monuments, the damage to cultural heritage was still expansive, and the vast majority of the invaluable articles of movable cultural property had not been recovered. A total of 992 Cypriots, both Greek and Turkish, were still missing. Turkey must provide the information in its military archives regarding their fate and whereabouts, and refrain from politicizing that purely humanitarian issue by withholding vital information that could bring much-needed closure for the families of the victims.

148. **The Chair** said that, because of the late hour, the interpreters would be dismissed, and the discussion would continue in English.

149. **Mr. Dai Bing** (China) said that Xinjiang was open to the world and everyone was welcome to visit. Such visits should be conducted in a friendly manner, not as an investigation. Every year, more than 200 million domestic and foreign tourists visited Xinjiang, including United Nations officials, Beijing-based diplomats, media correspondents and representatives of religious groups. Despite the many invitations from his Government, diplomats from the Canadian Embassy in Beijing refused to visit Xinjiang.

150. Ms. Meng was innocent and had not violated any law of Canada. She had been released after more than 1,000 days of illegal abduction in Canada, which clearly constituted political suppression. The cases of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor were totally different. Those two men had violated Chinese law and admitted to their crimes.

151. **Ms. Maille** (Canada) said that her Government had extended standing invitations to all the United Nations special procedures and had benefited throughout the years from visits from special rapporteurs. The special procedures of the United Nations and the Human Rights Council and all other United Nations organs were able to engage in friendly dialogue. Indeed, Canada had enjoyed a positive dialogue with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights over the years and encouraged China to view visits from the Commissioner in a positive light.

152. The ways in which the cases of Ms. Meng and the two Canadian citizens had been dealt with differed greatly. Ms. Meng had benefited from transparency and the rule of law in Canada. Her Government had been shocked by the treatment of the Canadian citizens. Canada hoped to continue its partnership with the international community to combat State-to-State arbitrary detention.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.