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Chair: Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname)
later: Ms. Šćepanović (Vice-Chair) (Montenegro)

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

Address by the President of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Jeremić** (President of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly) said that the Third Committee had played a crucial role in promoting social and humanitarian affairs and human rights within the United Nations system. Although the agenda for the current session was hectic, he urged the delegates to obtain the widest possible consensus on the items under discussion.

2. The debate on women's rights was critical, and gender equality was a goal worthy of universal support. He welcomed the guidance provided to Member States on the empowerment of women and girls by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

3. He commended the work of the General Assembly's subsidiary bodies, including the Human Rights Council. The report on the Council's nineteenth and twentieth sessions and its nineteenth special session (A/67/53) would be an important item on the agenda of the Third Committee. It was imperative that the Council's work should be grounded in the fundamental principles of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, and that it should evolve to meet the challenges of a changing world. He also drew attention to the work of the special procedure mandate holders and special rapporteurs.

4. Another priority for the General Assembly was the continuing process of strengthening the human rights treaty body system, with the aim of increasing the impact of treaties on rights holders and duty bearers at national level while maintaining the sovereignty of Member States.

5. He called on the Committee's members to maintain a constructive working atmosphere to aid consensus-building. It was his understanding that the issues arising at the start of session had been resolved, and its work thus far had been commendable. He encouraged members to work with the Second Committee on agenda items which concerned both bodies, in order to promote cohesion in the work of the plenary and the revitalization of the General Assembly.

6. Many of the matters addressed by the Third Committee were contentious, including country-

specific situations, the death penalty, the question of Palestine and religious defamation and intolerance, a particularly sensitive topic at the moment. Freedom of speech was a sacrosanct human right, but its abuse could result in hate speech. The blasphemous insults directed against religious figures and beliefs in recent months should be condemned in the harshest terms. The General Assembly should take action on instances of abuse such as a film promoting religious intolerance which had led to loss of life. He urged the Third Committee to produce a resolution supported by a wide majority, thus allowing the General Assembly to send a strong political and moral message. While acknowledging the sensitivities surrounding the issue, he encouraged the Committee to exercise leadership on behalf of the General Assembly.

7. He was ready to cooperate closely with the Committee on any matters arising during the current session.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/67/220, A/67/227 and A/C.3/67/L.2)

(a) **Advancement of women** (*continued*) (A/67/38, A/67/170, A/67/258 and A/67/261)

(b) **Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly** (*continued*) (A/67/185 and A/67/347)

8. **Ms. Farngalo** (Liberia) said that the wartime use of rape as a weapon in Liberia had led to the development of relevant legislation in the post-conflict years. A penalty of 10 years' imprisonment was now imposed and a special court had been set up to try sexual violence cases. The capacity of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Gender and Development to prosecute offences and protect and support women had been increased. Sexual and gender-based violence units would be deployed throughout Liberia by 2014. Women and child protection units of the Liberian National Police were responsible for investigating such cases. Training had been provided to police, lawyers and judges, and a domestic violence act was being developed.

9. In 2012, statutory rape accounted for half of all violent offences against women, followed by domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and gang rape. Occurrences of rape had fallen only slightly compared to 2011; the quality of the statistics had improved,

however, and the services provided meant that women felt more able to report offences and seek assistance.

10. The National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Management of Gender-based Violence in Liberia was designed to improve prevention and address the needs of survivors, including persons with disabilities. A one-stop service had been developed, and referral case management had increased reporting and prosecution by 10 per cent. Psychosocial centres and shelters were operational in three counties and would be expanded nationwide. Programmes allowing survivors to start small businesses and giving them access to an endowment fund ensured that their immediate and long-term needs were met.

11. Her Government had launched national campaigns targeting violence against women and children and participated in the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign. It produced radio and television programmes on the subject, had commissioned a study on the causes of sexual violence, and organized meetings including traditional leaders. The Ministry of Education was incorporating materials on gender-based violence into its life-skills education curricula. Men's networks were also being engaged, since it was essential for men's energies to be employed in the advancement of women.

12. Women's concerns were being integrated into national policy, and action plans were being translated into benefits for women. The National Gender Policy was to be harmonized with the National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Management of Gender-based Violence in Liberia and the action plan established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The use of sex-disaggregated data in gender statistics would help improve service delivery and achieve equality.

13. The Ministry of Gender and Development was working to improve conditions for women in the informal sector, increase women's access to financial services, improve education for women and girls and empower young women through literacy and small business training.

14. The 1325 Secretariat of the Ministry of Gender and Development, supported by UN-Women, had mobilized women to participate in the 2011 elections, trained female candidates and given them financial support. Government efforts for the advancement of women faced challenges from lack of human resources,

inefficient policy enforcement and inadequate data and coordination, but did not lack the political will and persistence to succeed.

15. **Ms. Niang** (Senegal) said that her delegation regretted the fact that Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 (Promote gender equality and empower women) would not be met by 2015, despite the progress made. It had been reaffirmed at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) that women and girls should participate fully in decision-making.

16. Her Government saw gender equality as essential to sustainable development and women's empowerment. Women in Senegal had formed associations including the Senegalese Women's Council, which advocated for capacity-building through basic training, and the Women's Platform for Peaceful Elections. The Government had mainstreamed gender into all development strategies, emphasizing the position of rural women.

17. The Ministry of Women, Children and Women's Entrepreneurship had been created to deal with the rights of women and vulnerable groups. Her Government had ratified all relevant international instruments and had adopted an act on gender equality in elective institutions. It ensured equal access to land and the means of production, provided free childbirth services, implemented the African Union Maputo Plan of Action, and had created a national fund to improve women's access to microfinancing.

18. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile) said that his Government saw gender equity and women's participation as essential to inclusive economic and social development and achievement of the MDGs, not to mention human rights. It had thus adopted a number of laws designed to provide equal opportunity for women, introduced programmes to improve access to employment for women heads of household and established the Presidential Consultative Commission on Women, Work and Maternity.

19. The main challenges in the area of education included expanded coverage for pre-school and reducing drop-out rates. Basic education coverage was 100 per cent, while middle-school attendance was 90 per cent. Of those completing higher education, 6 out of 10 were women. The educational needs of rural and indigenous women and girls, young pregnant women and young mothers were other areas of concern.

20. A universal health system had been established, which placed high priority on women's health. The MDG target for reduction of HIV prevalence in pregnant women had been achieved in 2010. One aim of the 2011-2020 National Health Strategy was a 10 per cent reduction in teenage pregnancy. The success achieved thus far had been made possible through a preventive approach linking sexual, reproductive and mental health.

21. Turning to women's political participation, he said that although more women than men had voted in the 2009 elections, women comprised only 13.1 per cent of the Senate and 14.2 per cent of the Chamber of Deputies. A bill was being drafted to improve women's access to elected office.

22. With regard to violence against women, he noted that the Act against Femicide had entered into force in December 2010. Programmes had been created to prevent domestic violence and protect its victims, and for early detection of violence. Centres had also been set up to treat male perpetrators of domestic violence. An Act criminalizing human trafficking and smuggling of migrants was aimed at preventing trafficking in women and girls. The National Office for Women's Affairs was piloting a housing scheme for trafficking victims and outlining a national policy.

23. International solidarity was essential to gender equality, women's empowerment and achievement of the MDGs with a view to the development agenda beyond 2015.

24. **Mr. Osorio** (Colombia) said that his Government had made its National Public Policy on Gender Equality for Women a priority and had recently presented an outline that had resulted from consultation with civil society and the Presidential Council for Women's Equality; international support, in particular from UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other international partners had been essential.

25. Although in Colombia the gender gap in education was narrow, it was wide in employment. Women's unemployment rate was twice that of men; in the private sector women earned 20 per cent less than men for the same work. Of women aged between 15 and 19, 19 per cent had been pregnant, and maternal mortality had risen compared to 2011. His Government had therefore set up gender offices in ministries and local secretariats, and had implemented a plan of action

to mainstream gender into all policies, programmes and strategies. An example was the Ministry of Labour, which had developed the National Programme for Gender Equality in the Workplace, aimed at eradicating discrimination against women, encouraging their participation in the job market and promoting policies to protect victims of gender-based armed violence.

26. The Government encouraged flexible working arrangements to support women with disabilities, mothers who were heads of households, nursing mothers and rehabilitated female combatants, while strengthening policies to help vulnerable women overcome extreme poverty through microfinance and capital for entrepreneurship. It had joined the Latin American Gender Equality Seal Practice Community and was implementing the Certification Programme for Gender Equality Management Systems.

27. The reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality was a high priority, and the Government had produced a Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Rights with the aim of reducing teenage pregnancy.

28. His Government had changed the law so that domestic violence and failure to provide maintenance could be reported by anyone and investigated by a judge *ex officio*. Training had been provided for civil servants working with female victims of violence, and coordination mechanisms had been created, including legal monitoring committees, interinstitutional committees and round tables on human trafficking, gender-based violence, care for child and adolescent victims of sexual abuse, and domestic violence. Committees within the Office of the Attorney-General were combating impunity for violent crimes against women and highlighting the early warning signs of violence.

29. Women's access to justice had been improved through centres for victims of sexual and domestic violence. A free advice line had been set up, as had networks of women against violence, consolidated through women's community councils.

30. **Ms. Vadiati** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Committee should examine the challenges of the economic crisis, foreign military intervention, unilateral economic sanctions, the threat of military aggression and a lack of global justice and spirituality.

31. The family was essential to women's dignity and empowerment, and should be the basis for the

objectives of UN-Women, as should respect for divine values and each country's specific characteristics. Accordingly, her Government had established the High-level National Headquarters of the Family, supervised by the President, with eight ministers as members.

32. In August 2012 her Government had hosted the 16th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, at which the Movement had reiterated its commitment to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Five-year Review and Appraisal, expressed its resolve to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, restated its positions on gender reform at the United Nations, recognized the importance of UN-Women in promoting gender equality within the United Nations system and reiterated the request for UN-Women to appoint a focal point for women living under foreign occupation.

33. Regarding the report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons (A/67/261), her delegation noted the growing concern about trafficking in women and children in the western hemisphere and urged destination countries to prevent it and protect its victims. Prevention was also essential to ending violence against women, and her Government had thus strengthened its legal and policy framework and conducted awareness-raising and advocacy programmes. A task force had been established, under the supervision of the Centre for Women and Family Affairs and the judiciary, to evaluate the drafting of a domestic violence bill.

34. Gender was being mainstreamed into national development policies and was being used as a budgeting tool to ensure that adequate resources were allocated to empower women and develop their capacities in all ministries. Iranian women were role models in science, education, health, economics, trade and production, and there were four women Cabinet members.

35. *Ms. Šćepanović (Montenegro), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

36. **Ms. Sumi** (Japan) said that her Government had emphasized equal participation of men and women in the recovery from the March 2011 earthquake off the coast of Japan, and had submitted a resolution based on its experience to the fifty-sixth session of the Committee on the Status of Women. Japan was committed to a gender-equal society, as set out in its

December 2010 Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had commended her Government's strengthening of temporary special measures to increase the employment of women in public life, as referred to in the Report on the Japanese Government's follow-up to the concluding observations of its forty-fourth session.

37. Japan was of the view that the socio-economic empowerment of women was indispensable in the recovery process; the Government had therefore adopted an action plan for economic revival through women's empowerment, which emphasized raising men's awareness, implementing positive steps and encouraging civil servants to play a leading role. The Comprehensive Strategy for the Rebirth of Japan suggested measures to implement parts of the action plan, the rest of which would be implemented through a road map to be produced by the end of 2012.

38. As part of the continuing effort to achieve the MDGs, including those relating to gender issues, over the five-year period from 2011 her Government would provide \$3.5 billion for educational assistance and \$5 billion towards health, including to its maternal health model, Ensure Mothers and Babies Regular Access to Care (EMBRACE), which ensured a continuum of care from pregnancy through after childbirth.

39. General Assembly resolution 66/290 had produced a common understanding of human security, which was a pillar of Japanese diplomacy. Through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, her Government had funded projects to protect women and vulnerable individuals, develop their potential and help them participate in society.

40. The implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security was a pressing matter. Women should participate in the drafting of constitutions and laws and in political and economic transitions. Through the Japan International Cooperation Agency, her Government had been supporting the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs to strengthen its administrative capacity and improve the circumstances of women in poverty.

41. **Mr. Chir** (Algeria) said that, since ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1996, Algeria had been reforming the national legal framework to place

the advancement of women at the centre of national policies and programmes. As a result of the January 2012 adoption of an act on political parties setting quotas for female representation, 146 women had been elected to the National People's Assembly at the May 2012 elections, compared to 31 in the previous term. The National Council for the Family and Women and the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Promotion and Integration of Women had also been established.

42. Girls' school enrolment had reached 97 per cent in 2010, and the ratio of girls to boys had improved. For a number of years, there had been more girls than boys in higher education. Women's participation in and decision-making was also increasing. Their employment in the public sector had grown significantly, and women made up 38 per cent of the judiciary. Efforts to reach rural women included literacy programmes and professional training for income generation.

43. Algeria had presented its third and fourth periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in February 2012 and it was currently examining the Committee's concluding observations on the reports. It had also undergone the universal periodic review process at the Human Rights Council in September 2012 and had accepted the majority of its recommendations, including those relating to the elimination of discrimination and violence against women.

44. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) said that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly were essential to women's equality, advancement and empowerment.

45. Palestinian women were bearing the brunt of the Israeli occupation, under which human rights violations affected their socioeconomic and psychological conditions and those of their children. The expansion of Israel's illegal settlements and the construction of the apartheid wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the increase in home demolitions, the restrictions on movement and the destruction of property threatened their survival and well-being.

46. Since 1967, 25 per cent of the Palestinian population had been detained in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Although most detainees were

men, women bore the social and financial costs, and were forced to take on the additional role of providing for their families.

47. Palestinian women suffered not only from domestic violence but also from the political violence of the occupying forces and illegal settlers. The Palestinian Authority had adopted a National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women for 2011 to 2019, prepared by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and UN-Women, to train and empower women, provide social support and promote a legal framework to stem violence.

48. For Palestinian women to enjoy freedom in an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, more assistance was needed from the international community. The suffering of Palestinian women and their families under occupation should be ended, and Israel should be held accountable for its crimes.

49. **Ms. Ojiambo** (Kenya) said that the problem of trafficking in women in girls seemed intractable, but its social, economic and emotional consequences were unacceptably high. The United Nations must show policy leadership in facilitating coherent inter-agency collaboration among all stakeholders to reduce trafficking particularly in source and destination countries. Her Government had passed legislation to prevent trafficking and protect its victims, with a 30-year sentence for perpetrators. The legislation recognized the pressures which encouraged trafficking, and put in place measures to reintegrate the victims.

50. The report of the Secretary-General on violence against women (A/67/220) had not adequately captured the fact that the perpetrator was usually known to the victim, and that the perpetrator and the victim were usually of a similar age, information that would be useful in developing a targeted plan to reduce domestic violence. Furthermore, with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), East African police chiefs had mapped out fruitful strategies to combat organized crime.

51. Legislation and plans of action could only go so far in dealing with trafficking and violence; resources were required to educate the target group, strengthen police work, build shelters, provide choices to victims and strengthen criminal justice systems. Even if such

actions would be a financial strain, the money would be well spent.

52. Although the failure to achieve consensus on the theme of rural women at the fifty-sixth session of the Committee on the Status of Women had been a major setback, her delegation believed that international engagement could still be achieved, even in relation to violence against women. With the Fifth United Nations World Conference on Women (Beijing+20) approaching, she urged the international community not to jeopardize the gains made thus far but to meet its commitments.

53. **Mr. Janjua** (Pakistan) said that his delegation was pleased to note the contribution made to women's advancement and empowerment by UN-Women; as a member of its Executive Board, his Government had helped to shape its Strategic Plan.

54. Pakistan's Constitution guaranteed women's full participation in national life. Its strategy for women's empowerment was based on combating the feminization of poverty, promoting gender equality, ending violence against women and introducing legislation for their protection and empowerment. The National Plan of Action was based on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Muslim world's first woman prime minister and first woman parliamentary speaker had been Pakistanis. Women comprised 22.2 per cent of the National Assembly and 17 per cent of the Senate, and held Cabinet posts. There was a national Women's Parliamentary Caucus, while 28,000 women were local councillors.

55. His Government had passed laws against practices leading to discrimination against women, workplace harassment and domestic violence. The National Commission on the Status of Women had been set up with full autonomy and an ombudsperson had been established to protect women against workplace harassment.

56. The Benazir Income Support Programme provided financial support to low-income women, skills to increase employability, health and insurance cover, access to education, and interest-free loans for women entrepreneurs. Seven million households would benefit from it.

57. His Government believed that a woman who could not plan her life, family or career was not free. It was committed to gender-responsive budgeting to promote policies and allocate resources with a gender-sensitive perspective. Its efforts to promote women's rights were supported by an independent judiciary, a free media, a vibrant civil society and a growing private sector, which helped redress violations, provide opportunities and raise awareness.

58. Lastly, he noted that the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action conducted in 2010 had revealed deficiencies in all 12 of its critical areas of concern, and more effort was needed in relation to gender aspects of the MDGs, for which international cooperation and partnerships were essential.

59. **Mr. Alcántara Mejía** (Dominican Republic) said that his Government's National Gender Equality Plan was based on human rights, high-impact pilot interventions and institutional coordination. Gender was one of the fundamental principles of national development, health, employment and education plans and strategies. With regard to women's political participation, in the Congress 20.8 per cent of deputies in the lower house and 9.4 per cent of senators were women. In the May 2012 presidential election and for the second time in history, a woman Vice-President had been elected. Initiatives of the new Administration included mainstreaming of gender equality in all public policies, elimination of domestic and gender-based violence and the establishment of programmes to care for its victims, increasing penalties for crimes of aggression and providing more facilities and counselling programmes for men who had committed such crimes, promoting responsible male behaviour through the education system and community involvement in domestic violence prevention. The national campaign to end violence against women, launched in September 2011 and implemented by the Ministry for Women, had reached over eight million people.

60. His Government welcomed the work of the UN-Women Executive Board, of which it was itself a member, and the opportunity to host the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. It had made a multi-year contribution to its Trust Fund, but was concerned by the Institute's inadequate funding, and called on donor countries to increase their voluntary contributions.

61. **Mr. Fiallo** (Ecuador) said that his Government acknowledged gender equality in the Constitution as a basic principle of the State, and ensured that differences of ethnicity, nationality, age, gender and sexual orientation were respected. Over the past five years, a national plan for the eradication of gender-based violence had been implemented, from an intersectoral and multidisciplinary approach. It was clear that the demands of indigenous women and women of African descent for their rights to be respected had been essential to progress on women's rights in general.

62. His delegation regretted the failure of the Committee on the Status of Women to adopt agreed conclusions on the empowerment of rural women at its fifty-sixth session in March 2012, although a resolution sponsored by Ecuador on indigenous women as key actors in poverty and hunger eradication (E/CN.6/2012/L.6) had been approved.

63. His Government had implemented a campaign against machismo and violence and had carried out the first National Survey of Family Relations and Gender-based Violence against Women, which had revealed that such violence was a sociocultural problem. Since 2008 his Government had comprised women Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Defence. Gender equality and women's empowerment were essential to the rule of law. The rights of indigenous and migrant women and girls and women and girls with disabilities should be high priorities for the current General Assembly session.

64. Lastly, his delegation thanked the UN-Women Executive Director for her support and her June 2012 visit to Ecuador, which had given fresh impetus to women's empowerment.

65. **Ms. Udommongkolkul** (Thailand) said that the twenty-first century was becoming the age of women, more of whom were occupying senior positions and emerging as world leaders. In Thailand, a quarter of the National Assembly was now women. The first woman Prime Minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, had strengthened gender equality and empowered women in science, business, the civil service, politics and diplomacy. Women's rights had been mainstreamed into national policy. Equal rights had been ensured in line with the Constitution, including through the withdrawal of Thailand's reservation on article 16 of the Convention

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

66. Certain women, however, remained marginalized and were victims of violence and human trafficking. They should be empowered through human-rights education, health care, equal socioeconomic opportunities and vocational training, as highlighted in the reports of the Secretary-General (A/67/170 and A/67/261). Networks of Government agencies, the private sector and civil society were essential to policy, prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership.

67. Her Government assisted victims of trafficking and violence by establishing shelters that provided health care, counselling, legal aid, education and interpretation. Trafficking victims were identified by a multidisciplinary team and given temporary work permits allowing them to earn income during the trial process. Thais trafficked overseas were returned through cooperation between Government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Thai embassies.

68. One-stop crisis centres in hospitals provided services to victims of violence. Non-governmental organizations and families were essential to dealing with domestic violence. National awareness-raising campaigns against violence and trafficking had been launched, targeting migrant women workers and women with disabilities.

69. The Department of Special Investigation of the Ministry of Justice worked with the police to prosecute abuse, exploitation and trafficking. Legal enforcement frameworks were being developed, and a specific department had been set up in the Office of the Attorney-General to expedite trafficking cases, which were fast-tracked through the courts of first instance.

70. Her Government had advocated for the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). The Thailand Institute of Justice had been established to support the implementation of those Rules worldwide.

71. The negative stereotyping which led to women's underdevelopment should be eliminated. Her Government sought root-cause solutions to gender inequality, trafficking in persons and domestic violence. The National Development Fund for Women had been set up to complement the Thai Women's

Development Plan. Girls were given 15 years of free education, which had led to a drop in child employment. Universal health coverage and reproductive health protection had lowered maternal and child mortality.

72. Her Government had engaged with the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. Her delegation hoped that United Nations and regional mechanisms could be translated into action to create a society in which women were safe from violence.

73. **Ms. Alsaleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her Government was committed to the Beijing Platform and had implemented reforms to ensure that women enjoyed full equality with men in her country, which even had a woman Vice-President. Syrian women were equal participants in economic, political, social and cultural life, in both the public and private sectors, and were entitled to equal pay for work of equal value. However, armed terrorist groups with foreign support and extremist religious outlooks were threatening to turn back the clock. Women had become afraid to go to work and girls had become afraid to go to school. The desperation of young Syrian girls in refugee camps in neighbouring countries was being exploited by sexual predators.

74. Despite the severity of conditions in her country, Syria was still focused on liberating the residents of the occupied Syrian Golan, including women and girls, from the yoke of Israeli occupation, and on achieving a just and comprehensive peace in conformity with international law. Her Government did what it could to alleviate conditions, notably by providing scholarships to dozens of female students from the Golan to study at Syrian universities. She called on the Secretary-General to include mention of the suffering of Syrian women in the occupied Golan in his reports on the agenda item, and also to devote attention to the negative impact of unilateral and unlawful sanctions on economic development and human rights.

75. **Mr. al-Mashan** (Kuwait) said that his country had recently established special family courts and intended to enact further family legislation. The State's policy on women and youth focused on empowering women, monitoring gains and setbacks, and providing

assistance to women in need, including through a housing fund that had helped over 60,000 divorcees, widows, spouses of non-Kuwaitis, and unmarried women. Women made an important contribution to Kuwaiti society as mothers raising future generations, and had also represented Kuwait commendably in various international venues. A milestone had recently been reached with the decision by the Supreme Judicial Council to allow women to serve as public prosecutors.

76. Kuwait had ratified various international instruments on women's rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two Protocols thereto concerning trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. His delegation was pleased to announce a contribution of \$100,000 to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women.

77. **Ms. Boiko** (Ukraine) said that equality for women was essential to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the progress of society as a whole. As a member of the executive board of UN-Women, Ukraine made sure that its legislation and five-year plans were in line with international instruments such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly. The office of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, which was itself headed by a woman, had a representative for children's rights, gender equality and non-discrimination. Ukraine fulfilled its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and was grateful for assistance for gender-related goals from the European Union and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme in formulating a State Programme for Ensuring Gender Equality in Ukraine for 2012-2016.

78. National, regional and international coordination were essential for combating the shameful practices of trafficking in women and girls and violence against women and girls with disabilities. Her delegation supported the activities of the working group on the

issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice and the extension until 2014 of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Ukraine had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and had signed the 2011 Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Particular attention needed to be devoted to the rights of rural women and women migrant workers.

79. **Ms. Battungalag** (Mongolia) said that her Government had decided to contribute financially to the annual budget of UN-Women, the establishment of which had been a landmark in the progress of gender equality and women's empowerment. Advancement of women was an important component of Mongolia's development agenda. Its 2011 gender equality law set quotas for women in public office, and the number of women Members of Parliament had tripled after the 2012 election. Support was also being provided for the economic empowerment of women in the form of hundreds of millions of dollars in soft loans for entrepreneurs. Mongolia was the main sponsor of the biennial General Assembly resolution on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, and had organized a side event on rural women at the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

80. **Mr. Daham** (Iraq) said that since 2003 his country had been working to achieve equality for women in public life. The 2005 Iraqi Constitution provided that 25 per cent of seats in the Iraqi Parliament should be held by women, and women also occupied high positions in the executive and judiciary branches. All Iraqi legislation was being reviewed with a view to eliminating provisions that discriminated on the basis of gender. Iraq would resume submitting its periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and had withdrawn its reservation to the provision of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women regarding equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children. Women were represented on the national independent commission that monitored human rights in Iraq.

81. His Government made sure to enforce laws prohibiting discrimination and violence against women, to provide assistance to divorcees and widows, and to promote gender equality in education. Community police had been deployed to combat

violence against women and a law against trafficking in persons had been adopted in 2012. Iraq was making every effort to comply with human rights guarantees contained in its Constitution and its commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Women and children suffered disproportionately from the impact of instability and were at risk of being turned into widows and orphans by terrorism. Despite those challenges a women's affairs infrastructure had been established that included the Ministry of Women's Affairs, a parliamentary Committee for Women, the Family and Childhood, and a Department of Protection For Widows and Divorcees within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. A legal framework to ensure gender equality had been established, and policies aimed at increasing women's participation in public life were being implemented. In Kurdistan, legal reforms were being implemented with a view to reducing polygamy, female genital mutilation and crimes of honour. The Kurdistan Constitution provided for quotas for women in public life that were similar to those provided for in the Iraqi Constitution.

82. **Mr. Rachmianto** (Indonesia) said that progress had been made in the quest for gender equality and the advancement of women, although the failure of the recent fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to reach conclusions that would have been pertinent to developing countries was a disappointment. Gender equality was essential to democracy. Although Indonesia's electoral law mandated that 30 per cent of candidates put forth by political parties should be women, women's representation in Parliament remained below 20 per cent. Women also continue to be underrepresented in the labour force, although their numbers had increased as a result of targeted small business loans, expansion of cooperatives and capacity-building programmes. He urged strengthening protection for migrant workers, and his country had recently joined the Equal Futures Partnership initiative, which complemented existing international instruments. Indonesia's national strategy targeted gender stereotyping, patriarchal customs, gender-based discrimination and violence, and all practices that hindered women's participation in politics and economic development.

83. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that despite international efforts, women continued to suffer disproportionately from poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and disease,

and often were the victims of discrimination, violence and human trafficking. Since its revolution, her country had worked to guarantee the equality of women and their integration into political and economic life, and in particular took care to ensure that poor rural women had access to assistance. A four-part strategy had been developed to combat violence against women that focused on collecting data, providing services, raising awareness and enforcing relevant laws. A counselling centre and a centre for psychological care had recently been established for women victims of domestic violence. The Tunisian Government was working to create an environment conducive to women's economic independence, inter alia by making resources available to rural women entrepreneurs. She drew attention to the systematic violation of the rights of women and children being committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and expressed admiration for the resilience of Palestinian mothers carrying out their roles under difficult conditions.

84. **Ms. Millogo Sorgho** (Burkina Faso) said that her country had created a Ministry for the Advancement of Women in 1997. It was in the process of implementing an ambitious national gender policy aimed at disseminating a culture of gender equality, building national capacities to address gender issues, and mobilizing financial and human resources to combat gender discrimination. A National Gender Council had been established to implement that policy. Laws had been enacted to promote women's access to land, credit, technology and training, and special attention was paid to girls' education and women's literacy. Financial assistance was provided for obstetric and neo-natal care, and strategies and programmes had been put in place to protect women's reproductive and sexual health.

85. Burkina Faso had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1984, and had taken numerous measures to put an end to discriminatory practices. It had set up shelters and hostels for women victims of domestic violence, abandoned infants, young girls with unwanted pregnancies, and women ostracized for alleged witchcraft. It had a strategy of zero tolerance for female genital mutilation, and hoped for unanimous adoption of the draft resolution on that brutal practice being submitted by the African Group.

86. **Ms. Yakivu** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the principle of gender equality was enshrined

in her country's 2006 Constitution, and a national gender policy had been in place since 2009. The integration of gender into national legislation was reflected in the Labour Code and laws on child protection, HIV/AIDS, and gender parity in electoral lists. In conjunction with UNICEF, the Government had conducted an All Girls to School campaign in 2006. A roadmap on gender and education had been drawn up and, since 2009, free primary education had been provided throughout the country with the exception of the city-provinces of Kinshasa and Lubumbashi.

87. The Democratic Republic of the Congo had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1986 and submitted its national reports regularly. It had put in place national mechanisms to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and a national strategy to increase women's political participation. The Government promoted women's economic independence through its national anti-poverty strategy and microfinance for rural women and widows. In 2007, a national programme for the advancement of Congolese women had been implemented that addressed the 12 areas of concern in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Mechanisms had been put in place to encourage women to make their concerns known and to take part in economic development, especially in rural areas.

88. Since 2009, the stabilization and reconstruction plan for areas emerging from armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been implementing a strategy to combat sexual and gender-based violence that included combating impunity, protecting vulnerable persons such as women and children, mainstreaming gender into the justice and law-enforcement system, streamlining data collection and legal prosecution, and providing medical, psychological and rehabilitation services to victims. Women themselves had taken charge of the anti-violence campaign, and in 2012 had launched a zero tolerance campaign against sexual and gender-based violence throughout the Great Lakes Region. Such violence persisted, however, because of cultural norms and continued conflict, and she appealed for international action to eradicate it.

89. **Mr. Apakan** (Turkey) said that Turkey had been the first country to ratify the 2011 Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence

against Women and Domestic Violence, and had recently adopted a new law that criminalized all forms of physical, verbal, sexual, economic and psychological violence against women. His delegation placed special importance on the resolution on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, which would set the tone for the session of the Commission on the Status of Women scheduled to be held on that subject in March 2013. He also noted that the very first International Day of the Girl Child had just been celebrated on 11 October 2012, in implementation of a resolution co-sponsored by his delegation the previous year. It would be useful to start using the concepts of “girls” and “women” together instead of treating them as two separate issues. His delegation had been organizing activities related to elderly persons, and he believed that UN-Women could take the lead in furthering advocacy for elderly women. It was crucial to mainstream gender into discussion of the development agenda beyond 2015.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.