

13 October 2010



## General Assembly GA/SHC/3979

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Sixty-fifth General Assembly  
Third Committee  
12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> Meetings (AM & PM)

### **TO 'TRULY UNIVERSALIZE' CHILD RIGHTS GLOBAL COMMUNITY MUST REACH NEEDIEST CHILDREN**

#### **IN CRITICAL EARLY YEARS WITH NUTRITION, PROTECTION, THIRD COMMITTEE TOLD**

##### **Head of UN Children's Fund Addresses Committee; also Hears Special Envoys On Children and Armed Conflict, Violence against Children, Sale of Children**

To "truly universalize child rights," the world community must reach the neediest children in their early years, with critical nutrition, nurturing, education and child protection, the head of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) told the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) today.

"Early childhood provides an unparalleled window of opportunity to make a lasting difference — and we must seize it," said Anthony Lake, as he addressed the Committee on the first day of its discussion on the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

Research showed that investing in early childhood interventions, focused where they were most needed, resulted in the best long-term outcome and a more equitable world, he said. Through an "integrated approach," efforts could be focused on nutrition, breastfeeding and nurturing, birth registration, education and child protection, relying on bottom-up innovation and delivery at the community level to those greatest in need.

"What better way to reduce inequities than to reach the neediest children in the critical early years when we know we can have the greatest impact?" he asked.

To help delegates think about the importance of such early intervention, he asked them to imagine a courtroom somewhere, into which a newborn baby was brought before a stern judge, who sentenced the child to die or, at best, to a live with deprivation and disease. Such a thing was "unimaginable," he said, and, yet, that was what happened to millions of children in the world's poorest and most disadvantaged places.

"Through inattention, through inaction, through simple ignorance, when we fail to reach those children in the first days and years of their young lives, we slam down the gavel on their future," he said. "So much depends on those moments and months. It is up to all of us, not a fictional judge, to make the most of them."

Mr. Lake was among several top United Nations Officials who appeared today as the Committee took up its agenda item on the promotion and protection of the rights of children, including the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy; the Special Representative on Violence Against Children, Marta Santos Pais; and the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Yanghee Lee; and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Najat M'jid Maalla. All

but Ms. Lee had a discussion period with Member States.

Discussing the effects of violence on younger children - "the theme this year" — Ms. Pais said that violence left dramatic scars and lifelong consequences, compromising children's development, learning abilities and school performance, as well as provoking low self-esteem, emotional distress and aggressive behaviour.

"Younger children are at special risk, having less ability to speak up and seek support and also greater chances of suffering irreversible emotional and health damage," she said.

While answering the questions of the representatives of Malaysia and Chile regarding addressing root causes that facilitated violence, she stated that poverty was one of the main factors, because the lack of access to social services created conditions that more often led to violence, which was why support to poor families with young children was necessary and the theme of narrowing disparities early in a child's life was so critical.

Delegates from twenty-four countries also took the floor this morning to continue their debate on the advancement of women. Underlining that many of the challenges to gender equality and women's empowerment were due to a lack of economic resources, many of the representatives, such as Swaziland, El Salvador, and Nepal, called for the international community to invest more in the form of additional financial and technical assistance to developing countries.

Also speaking this morning on the advancement of women were the representatives of Bangladesh, Turkey, Poland, Slovenia, Eritrea, Bhutan, Tunisia, India, Georgia, Malta, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Mauritania, Iceland, Timor-Leste, Gabon, Sri Lanka, Montenegro, Peru, the Philippines, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Committee will meet again at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 14 October, to continue its discussions on the advancement of women, as well as the rights of children.

### Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met today to complete its discussion on the advancement of women (for more information, please see Press Release [GA/SHC/3977](#)) and to begin its discussion on the rights of children.

The Committee had before it a letter dated 24 August 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly (document A/65/336), summarizing the conclusions of the forum regarding the margins of the Economic and Social Council's 2010 session, titled "Feed minds, change lives: school feeding, the Millennium Development Goals and girls' empowerment", and held at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

It also had before it the report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (document A/65/41 (Supp.)), summarizing the work of that Committee over the past year, including events marking the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the first international instrument dedicated exclusively to the protection and promotion of children's rights. It noted how, as of 29 September 2010, there were 193 States parties to the Convention, with its Optional Protocol regarding children in armed conflict ratified or acceded to by 131 States parties. Another Optional Protocol regarding the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been ratified or acceded to by 136 States parties. To mark the twentieth anniversary, a two-day "celebration" was organized in Geneva on 8 and 9 October 2009 that was attended by nearly 700 people, including children. Its central themes were dignity, development and dialogue, and the report speaks in details of the proceeding and outcome of the event. The report also includes general comments on indigenous children and on the right of the child to be heard. The latter concluded that the right of every child to be heard on all matters concerning him or her was a "clear and immediate obligation" of States parties to the convention, without discrimination. Various barriers to children being able to be heard had to be removed, and assumptions about children's capacities to be heard had to be challenged, it stated.

Also before the Committee was the report on the Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (document A/65/206). The report highlights roles and responsibilities for the fulfilment of the rights to survival, development, protection and participation in early childhood, and focuses on the implementation of these rights. The report concludes that many challenges remain in fully ensuring that young children's rights are fulfilled in a holistic manner that will guarantee that all children survive, thrive and develop to their full potential, and that the greatest challenge is achieving equity and reaching the most disadvantaged children and their families.

The report states that governments, international actors, civil society, communities and families can strengthen their efforts to ensure the full realization of children's rights in early childhood by promoting respect for these rights in national policies and programmes. States are encouraged to: establish a framework of laws, policies and programmes ensuring that the rights of the child are implemented and researched, promote comprehensive community-based strategies involving access to essential care services and education programmes, implement pro-equity strategies for early childhood regarding issues like birth registration and social protection, strengthen awareness and recognition of rights in early childhood by empowering parents and professionals to fulfil their care duties, and establish a global alliance in collaboration with United Nations agencies to advocate for the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols in early childhood.

The Committee had before it the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (document A/65/219). The report, covering the year to August 2010, outlines critical child protection themes in the context of the changing nature of conflict and a prevailing climate of impunity with respect to perpetrators. It encourages Member States which have not already done so to sign and/or ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on involvement of children in armed conflict, to secure its universal ratification by 2012. It also emphasized the Special Representative's role in bringing the key principles for child protection to the attention of the Member States, noting her belief that field missions remain crucial in advancing the cause of children, and that it is essential to engage with national Governments to more effectively support the efforts of national institutions in the protection, reintegration and rehabilitation of children.

Recommendations to Member States include: prioritizing the prosecution of perpetrators through national judicial processes; implementation of national strategies on sexual violence that address accountability of perpetrators and services for survivors; dialogue with all parties to a conflict for the exclusive purpose of eliciting concrete child protection commitments; ensuring that national and multinational forces adopt standard operating procedures to mitigate the direct targeting or collateral death and injury of children; enforcing the concept of schools as zones of peace; ensuring that key child protection responsibilities are specified as overall mission success criteria and performance benchmarks; ensuring protection of children during all stages of the peace process and including child protection elements in guidance materials for peace process mediators; and ensuring any measures concerning the detention of children are in line with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, emphasizing alternatives to institutionalization.

Also before the Committee was the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children (document A/65/262). The report by Marta Santos Pais, who assumed her position on 1 September 2009, outlines her vision, priority areas for work, and strategies intended to achieve progress, putting special emphasis on three overarching recommendations: the development in each State of a comprehensive strategy on violence against children; the introduction of an explicit national legal ban on all forms of violence in all settings; and the consolidation of data and research in this field. It also reviews key initiatives promoted by the Special Representative to advance progress in the follow-up to the study, strengthen strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, and secure firm support for her mandate. In the immediate future, the Special Representative intends to advance her two-year campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and adherence to other treaties aiming at children's protection from violence, and support the development of a thematic report on safe and accessible counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms on violence against children.

The report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child

pornography (document A/65/221) was the first report submitted to the Assembly by the current Special Rapporteur, Ms. Najat M'jid Maalla. It describes the activities undertaken from September 2009 to July 2010 and the remaining challenges to implementing the 10-year-old Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography ("Optional Protocol"). To improve implementation, the Special Rapporteur recommended new approaches be adopted that are informed by objective realities, permitting a better understanding of the multidimensional nature of the issues, the development of sustainable strategies, and decentralization through establishing local services that are accessible to all children. She also recommended monitoring and establishing protection systems that safeguard the best interests of the child. The implementation of such systems relies on, for example, the ratification of the second Optional Protocol and other relevant international and regional instruments by those countries that have not yet done so; a protective legislative framework and police services that are accessible without discrimination; social services that are accessible to children and families; a socio-economic framework with economic support for vulnerable families; a reliable standardized information system and rigorous method to gather and process disaggregated data; corporate social responsibility and support through public-private partnerships; systematic participation and representation by children in developing, implementing and monitoring child protection strategies; and an international cooperation framework governing effective mobilization of all stakeholders and exchange of information.

Finally, the Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General entitled follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (document A/65/226). Unique challenges posed by the global economic crisis threatened to halt or reverse progress in achieving "A world fit for children" as called for at a special session of the General Assembly on 11 to 13 December 2007, it says. Promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS were the goals set out in "A world fit for children", but the report warns that failure to achieve those goals would significantly undermine efforts towards realising the Millennium Development Goals. The report calls for Governments to do more, to the maximum extent of their capacities, and for an increased commitment from the international community. Among the many points raised, the report notes how nutrition security is increasingly part of the dialogue on food security, and how progress in young child development has been constrained by insufficient knowledge of care for young children, sometimes leading to poor care-giving practices. With regards to education, some 65 per cent of children who are out of school in the world lived in 33 conflict-affected areas; in the next decade, up to 175 million are likely to be affected every year by natural disasters resulting from climate change.

#### Discussion on Advancement of Women

A.K. ABDUL MOMEN ( Bangladesh) said that, under the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, his country had consistently put empowerment of women high on its development agenda. A National Women's Development Policy had been revived and a number of measures introduced, including equal rights of women to inheritance and extended maternity leave. There had been considerable investment in women's education, with a commitment to tuition-free education for women up to the undergraduate level by 2013. To help eradicate poverty, the social safety net has been strengthened, skills training provided, and support extended to small and medium entrepreneurs, making women agents of change.

Bangladesh, a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, believed that the United Nations must remain vigilant in focusing on the provisions of Security Council Resolution 1325, he said. Multidimensional peacekeeping operations had a large potential for addressing the security and well-being of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. The gender perspective has been integrated into some aspect of UN peacekeeping operations, and in June this year Bangladesh contributed an all-female Formed Police Unit — the second of its kind — to the United Nations mission in Haiti. In partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and some non-governmental organizations, Bangladesh had taken a number of measures for the treatment of women with obstetric fistula and to help their social integration. The \$500 million allocated so far for UN Women was "too paltry an amount for half of the entire population of the world"; as it would be working mostly in developing countries, much more funding will be required. Developed countries were urged to fulfil their Official Development Assistance commitments, as reaffirmed in the Brussels Plan of Action.

ZWELETHU MNISI ( [Swaziland](#)) said his Government believed that sustainable development would not be achieved without the equal participation of women in all spheres. It was committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and was party to several other human rights instruments promoting gender equality. He announced his Cabinet's approval of a National Gender Policy meant to guide the planning of development programmes through a gender lens and to provide a legal framework for institutionalizing gender mainstreaming at all levels. Further, Swaziland was actively participating in the African Women's Decade 2010-2020, and welcomed the establishment of UN Women. The Government had also made significant progress in the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 5, having improved the integration of reproductive health services and expanded Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV to cover 80 per cent of health facilities in 2009, from 2 per cent in 2003.

Despite progress, many challenges regarding the advancement of women remained, including poverty, HIV and AIDS. "In Swaziland, women provide 90 per cent of all care and support for people with AIDS related illnesses," he said, stating that women faced a "triple jeopardy," as people infected with HIV, as mothers of infected children and as caregivers for partners, parents or orphans with AIDS. Because the main challenges were due to a lack of resources, he called for further strengthened cooperation from development partners on the transfer of resources through development assistance, trade, investment, technology transfer and human resources development. Noting that violence against women and girls persisted in every part of the world, he said that Swaziland was promulgating legislation to address domestic and sexual violence, which would soon be passed as an Act of Parliament, and had established a Sexual Offences Unit. Swaziland also expressed support for the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons in July 2010 and hope that the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for victims of trafficking would be operationalized as soon as possible.

RAMIS SEN ( [Turkey](#)) said that the work of the United Nations and its gender architecture would be strengthened by the establishment of UN Women. Turkey congratulated Michelle Bachelet on her appointment as its executive director. Since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325, progress has been made for the protection and promotion of women's and girls' rights in conflict-affected situations, but much remained to be done, particularly in the area of implementation, and more effective action needed to be taken.

Turkey could proudly say, without hesitation, that as a result of reforms undertaken in the last decade, "no single legal barrier is left against gender equality" in the country, he said. It had enshrined the principle of gender equality in its Constitution, and given supremacy to international conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, over all national laws. For those requiring social protection, including for women that was now part of the Constitution. In terms of implementation, great strides had been made. The Ninth Development Plan called for improved access for women to education and employment, while a new action plan on combating domestic violence against women was being prepared. Countless projects and campaigns had been launched in the mass media, universities, local administration and civil society to raise public awareness about a range of women's issues, including honour crimes and reproductive health. Turkey invited all interested parties to an international meeting on women in Istanbul on 5 to 6 November 2010.

PAWEL HERCZYNSKI ( [Poland](#)) noted that in September 2010 the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration was celebrated. Within the last 15 years the equal rights of women and men, including equal access to opportunities and resources, an equal share of family responsibilities and a harmonious partnership between women and men had been not only critical to the well-being of the family, but also to the consolidation of democracy. Further, he observed that "in the last few years, the issues of domestic violence, violence against women and human trafficking ceased to be merely private problems of the victims and became social issues known to the wider public".

Gender equality was not only key to social justice, but a prerequisite to sustainable economic growth and social cohesion, he said. The Polish Government paid much attention to the advancement of women, as well as to promoting the issue of gender equality through the promotion of equal opportunities in the labour market and the counteracting of gender-stereotypes. That stance was also reflected in the last two Congresses of Polish Women, organized 20 years after

Poland's political transition. While Poland supported the statement of the European Union, he reiterated the delegation's position that any references to sexual and reproductive rights did not constitute the promotion of abortion.

SANJA ŠTIGLIC ( Slovenia) noted the delegation's alignment with the statement delivered by Belgium on behalf of the European Union and expressed great satisfaction with the creation of UN Women, quoting Under-Secretary General Bachelet that it would be the "driver to direct UN activities". Her delegation also endorsed the recently established working group under the auspices of the United Nations Human Rights Council to deal specifically with the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice and encouraged all States to fully cooperate with the group.

Despite the fact that women and girls were "powerful agents for development", she asserted, they still represented the majority of the poor. For that reason, empowerment of women was a cross-cutting issue in Slovene development cooperation. Without dedicated action in that area, the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals would be endangered, as women's rights, gender equality, human development and the Goals were interconnected and mutually reinforcing. In addition, regardless of all the efforts made since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325, which acknowledged the role of women in the promotion of peace and security, sexual violence was still prevalent during and after armed conflicts. At the international level, she emphasized the need to adopt indicators to monitor the implementation of the resolution and consistently fight against impunity for those crimes. Nations also had to draft action plans to implement the resolution at the national level. She noted that Slovenia would adopt such an action plan shortly.

Aligned with the Group of 77, AMANUEL GIORGIO ( Eritrea) said Eritrea last year marked the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), which was created during Eritrea's armed struggle for independence. The Union aimed to achieve equality between women and men by promoting the creation of better political, economic, social and cultural opportunities for women. After several open discussions held around the country last year, the Union found that there was a greater awareness of women's rights and the need to empower them. Many women had better access to economic and social opportunities than their parents' generation and greater participation in the political decision-making process. Yet, women continued to bear heavy family and community responsibilities that blocked their access to opportunities.

It was necessary to move beyond laws to correct the root causes that created gender imbalances, he said. Better coordination and the replication of successful projects were ways to help women advance. For example, "The Donkey and Canvas Project" in rural areas had helped in fetching water, transportation and generating income for women, while encouraging boys to help in activities traditionally assigned to girls. It also had given girls time to attend school. The discussion also had shown that greater results were obtained when Eritrean women were actively involved in programmes, from planning to implementation. He added that the Government was committed to eliminating obstetric fistula by 2011, by expanding free health services to all, including the creation of maternity waiting homes for remote communities. The Government had also intensified its efforts to eliminate female genital mutilation.

SONAM TOBGAY ( Bhutan) aligned with the statement delivered by Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and welcomed the establishment of UN Women to address gender equality and women's empowerment. As a state party to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, he stated that Bhutan was fully committed to ensuring the equality of women and men in the enjoyment of human rights. In that context, there were three pieces of legislation awaiting adoption by Parliament: the Child Care and Protection Bill; the Adoption Bill; and the Domestic Violence Bill. These would reinforce existing legislation and empower the various institutions working to promote the rights of women and children.

Further, for the first time, — gender had been included as a cross-cutting theme in the country's Five Year Plan in order to mainstream gender and generate gender-disaggregated data, he said. The newly developed National Plan of Action for Gender would guide that mainstreaming into such areas as education, health, good governance and economic development. In the year 2009, his country presented the seventh periodic report on the situation of women and the implementation of the Women's Anti-Discrimination Convention within the country. In that regard,

he noted that Bhutan was strengthening its institutional capacity and augmenting the resources of its relevant legal and executive arms of government to implement the monitoring Committee's recommendations. In view of its longstanding investment in promoting the rights of women, he was pleased to report that Bhutan had already achieved the MDG target of gender parity in school enrolment, the "ultimate leveller of all inequalities".

GHAZI JOMAA ( Tunisia) said there could never be democracy or development without women, nor could society reach the highest levels of progress and security without the advancement of women. Since independence, the advancement of women has been a priority for Tunisia, which in 1956 promulgated legislation that abolished polygamy and made divorce subject to judicial procedure. Several measures and reforms had been undertaken by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to consolidate the leading role of women in Tunisia, based on the unswerving principle that strengthening the rights of women was the best way to guarantee the well-being of the family and society.

The protection of the rights of women, elimination of all forms of discrimination against them, and the consecration of equality and partnership with men in family affairs and in society were today a reality in Tunisia, spelled out in law, implemented in practice and guaranteed by the Constitution, he said. That was demonstrated by statistics that showed, for instance, that 99 per cent of girls of age six were in school. Besides legal measures, Tunisia had also adopted a coherent strategy for eliminating all forms of violence against women, and to that end it had set up a research centre on women's issues. During the Tunisian presidency of the Organization of Arab Women, under First Lady Leïla Ben Ali, there had been intensive activity at the regional and international level to raise awareness about the condition of women.

SHRI K C VENUGOPAL ( India), noting that socio-economic development would be incomplete if women were ignored, said that India's Constitution codified the principles of gender equality and empowerment of women, which had been further reinforced through amendments in legislation and policy. India formulated the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in 2001, and the country's ongoing eleventh five year development plan (2007-2012) had recognized women as agents of sustained socio-economic growth. Highlighting a number of programmes that were being implemented to mainstream gender throughout the activities of the Government, he said that the country's Education for All Campaign had focused on girls' education, aiming to target the girls who were hardest to reach through residential schools, mid-day meals and other incentives. In the field of economic and social empowerment, more than 2.2 million economically sustainable Self Help Groups had been created, covering 33 million households. "This programme has been a silent revolution for women," he said.

Regarding health, India had launched the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in 2004, spending more than \$3.5 billion annually on health, including on programmes focusing on maternal and children's health and on links between villages and health centres. India had also experienced a decline in the infant and mortality rates. Further recognizing that political empowerment was the most important component in the overall empowerment of women, he said that India had made efforts to include women in decision-making at all levels. India had amended its Constitution to give 33 per cent reservation for women in rural and urban local bodies, which had led to the election of more than a million women representatives since 1993. Last year, India's Parliament enacted a law to raise the percentage of women in local bodies to 50 per cent. The Upper House of Parliament had also passed a bill, which was being pursued in the Lower House of Parliament, to reserve 33 per cent of seats in the Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies for women. Additionally, India expressed support for the creation of UN Women, the launch of the Global Plan of Action against trafficking in person, and the launch of the Secretary-General's Global Strategy on Women's and Children's Health.

CARLOS ENRIQUE GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ( El Salvador), noting that the Government attached importance to gender equality and was pleased to commemorate the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, said that El Salvador welcomed and was committed to the work to be carried out by UN Women. The Government reiterated its conviction that UN Women should have geographic representation, reflected in its constitution, as well as new executive board. El Salvador also expressed the hope that the mandate of International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) would be undertaken by UN Women, reflecting

the vision of the General Assembly's resolution.. Additionally, El Salvador expressed support for continued training of women through the INSTRAW facilities in the Dominican Republic, given factors such as the convenient location and low operational cost.

He also expressed appreciation for the visit of the Special Rapporteur to El Salvador in 2010, which provided a valuable opportunity to observe efforts taken by the country, particularly relating to violence against women, which was a significant obstacle to development. The country had promoted substantive change to make gender a cross-cutting issue, such as with the establishment of the Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU), which had a mandate of creating a society based on gender equity through the narrowing of the gender gap. Under the guidance of ISDEMU, a second national policy for women had been implemented. Ties between civil society and women's organizations had been established with a view towards a more participatory policy. Through ISDEMU, the Government had initiated the process of restructuring programs to combat violence against women with a more gender-based approach, focusing attention on such issues as domestic violence, trafficking, and sexual violence. A special office within ISEMDU had also been created for cases of sexual violence in workplace, both in the public and private sector.

NELI SHIOLASHVILI ( [Georgia](#)) welcomed the establishment of UN Women, and drew attention to two major laws recently adopted by her country's Parliament: one that promoted gender equality and another that addressed domestic violence and the protection and support of its victims. The major driving force behind these initiatives had been a Gender Equality Advisory Council, a prominent body that had been influencing legislative and executive agendas. Under its guidance, two state-run shelters for the victims of domestic violence had been recently established, providing victims with a secure place to stay as well as legal, medical and psychological support.

Georgia also had in place programs to assist vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons — women, the elderly and children who became victims of ethnic cleansing as a result of foreign military invasion in 2008 and the ongoing occupation of Georgian territory — whose rights and hopes had been partially addressed by consecutive resolutions of the General Assembly. The Government of Georgia would spare no effort to provide internally displaced persons with decent living conditions and financial support. Georgia was a signatory to all major international conventions on violence against women; today it had more effective tools to handle gender-related issues and it was committed to pursue its efforts to better the quality of life of women.

SAVIOUR F. BORG ( [Malta](#)) said the statement of the European Union reflected his country's position, and Malta strongly supported full implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent international instruments, as well as the Millennium Development Goals. However, concerning women's sexual and reproductive health, rights and services, he said Malta did not accept terms or recommendations that implied practices resulting in abortion could be used in Malta. Termination of pregnancy through induced abortion procedures was illegal in his country, where it was not recognized as a means of family planning. Any discussion of rights and services in connection with women's empowerment and reproductive health could not exclude the right to life, which was a fundamental human right.

Promotion of equality between women and men existed in Malta in both law and practice, and gender mainstreaming was a horizontal priority for the government, he said. Through active inclusion and enhanced equality of opportunities, Malta had been empowering women to participate in the labour market and social spheres. It has assisted women and men suffering from violence; it has also been making work pay adequate and affordable housing more available, and combating intergenerational poverty and social exclusion. Malta welcomed the establishment of UN Women, which would help strengthen the capacity, accountability and effectiveness of the United Nations system in gender equality and empowerment of women.

WOINSHET TADESSE ( [Ethiopia](#)) listed a number of gaps and challenges that demanded collective action and commitment. In different parts of the world, there were still laws that discriminated against women. Representation of women in decision-making remained below the target of 30 per cent. There were discrepancies between legislation and implementation. The majority of women lived in poverty — working in low-paid jobs, without job security — and there had



been very limited progress in reproductive health. Non-traditional forms of violence, including trafficking in women and girls, abduction and rape, had become global phenomena. A greater political will and leadership at the national, regional and international levels was imperative in order to increase resources and implement policies and strategies towards gender equality and women's equality.

Ethiopia looked forward to the establishment of the executive board of UN Women, which should take balanced geographical representation into account, she said. At the national level, Ethiopia has undertaken a number of policy and legislative steps in order to curb discrimination against women. Its Federal Constitution recognized women's equal rights and there had been a considerable increase in the number of women in decision-making and leadership roles. Efforts had been made to increase the enrolment and retention rate of girls and women in education and, under the food security programme, more attention had been given to women, particularly female-headed households. Under the revised Penal Code, female genital mutilation, rape, abduction and trafficking were considered to be serious crimes that deserved severe punishment.

CECILE MBALLA EYENGA ( Cameroon) described the three poles of her country's national strategy for promoting sexual equality: improving the living conditions of women; improving their socio-judicial status; and strengthening institutions. Initiatives were being taken to ensure the full participation of women in development and a growing number of strategic positions in the civil service and political spheres were now held by women. Liberalization of the banking sector had opened new perspectives for women; more micro-credit institutions meant more response to the needs of women for financing. Support for small business, coaching for upstarts, the promotion of partnerships with businesswomen in other countries, and other initiatives meant a growing number of businesswomen and female executives in Cameroon.

To ensure the participation of rural women in decision-making, the government had undertaken socio-anthropological studies in order to identify and address socio-cultural factors that accounted for the persistence of social prejudices against women, she said. Efforts had been made to widen access to non-agricultural work for women, including the creation of small businesses in rural areas and the hiring of women by those businesses. With regard to health, to improve conditions for rural women the government had taken charge of essential needs, setting up health centres in villages that offered a variety of services, including HIV/AIDS awareness units. Free retro-virals were available to urban and rural women alike, and educational campaigns were in place to combat female genital mutilation and early marriage.

GYAN CHANDRA ACHARYA ( Nepal), stating that sustainable peace could not be achieved without ensuring equal rights to women, welcomed the new Under-Secretary General for UN Women. For its part, Nepal had adopted a rights-based approach to the empowerment of women and the country's Interim Constitution enshrined gender equality. Women in Nepal occupied approximately 33 per cent of total seats in the Constituent Assembly, which had the responsibility of a parliament, and special provisions had been made in Nepal's Civil Service Act for women's inclusion at the policy-making level. The National Women's Commission had been established as an autonomous statutory body for the protection of women's rights, and Nepal had been submitting reports as a party to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. A law review committee under the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare was also working towards repealing laws still perceived to be discriminatory.

Believing that trafficking was a serious global problem, Nepal had ratified the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking of Women and Children for Prostitution in 2002, and promulgated the Anti-Human Trafficking Act in 2007, he said. Task Forces had been set up against trafficking at the national, district and municipal levels and, Women and Child Service Centres had been formed in 26 districts to protect women and children from violence related to trafficking. Additionally, even though limited access to health facilities in the rural parts of Nepal was a challenge, Nepal's maternal mortality rate had been reduced to 239 per 100,000 live births and the Government aimed to substantially reduce it even further. Nepal stated that the priority with regard to UN Women's and United Nations efforts should be given to development in rural areas. Financial support was necessary for agricultural and infrastructure development to improve the situation of women in rural areas.

ABDERRAHIM OULD HADRAMI ( [Mauritania](#)) expressing support for the establishment of UN Women, said that the advancement of women was enshrined in the country's constitution, which provided women rights in political and public life. Mauritanian society also granted special attention to female-headed households, especially as more than half of them were located in rural areas. With regard to education, Mauritania had recorded an increase in enrolment rates among girls, with rural females benefiting the most, due to a new compulsory education law for children between the ages of 6 and 14 years. As to high school education, the participation of girls in Mauritania exceeded 50 per cent today. Additionally, although Mauritanian women continued to be visibly absent in sectors like construction and maritime work, they were strongly present in sectors like information technology, and office and secretarial work.

Notwithstanding the achievements made, health remained a concern because maternal mortality in Mauritania was high when compared with Africa and global levels, he continued. One area that showed the success of reforms in systems and legislation, however, was women's participation in political life. Twenty-seven parliamentarians out of 151 were women, as were 1,120 municipality heads. On the executive level, the president had also granted women unprecedented political status by naming women ministers, such as the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The economic participation of women in Mauritania was another main priority. The Government was pursuing a number of strategies to alleviate poverty and enhance levels of development among rural women, but existing challenges included insufficient access to tools of production, high rates of unemployment, low access to markets, and lack of expertise in entrepreneurship.

GUNNAR PÁLSSON ( [Iceland](#)) recalled how women in his country gained the right to vote 95 years ago, and that 30 years ago it was the first democracy to elect a woman president. Today, its government was led by a woman. It was also 35 years since women gathered for a large rally that put gender issues firmly on the agenda; another rally was to be held this year, focusing on gender-based violence. Iceland was confident, on the tenth anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325, that the appointment of a Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict and increased efforts by the International Criminal Court and other institutions would help prevent and end impunity for the kinds of crimes seen earlier this year in the eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo.

The importance of Security Council Resolution 1325 could not be overemphasized, he said. Its aspects relating to women's participation in peace negotiations were a point of particular focus for Iceland, where a gender equality training programme has been set up at the University of Iceland. Its objective, with students participating from Afghanistan and Palestine, was to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in developing countries and in countries affected by conflict. It was hoped that that programme would one day be recognized as a United Nations University Programme. Trafficking in persons was a lucrative criminal activity in many countries that had far-reaching implications. Earlier this year, Iceland had ratified the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and children. That ratification should assist victims in reaching out for help.

SOFIA BORGES ([Timor-Leste](#)) welcomed the establishment of UN Women and stated its dedication to promoting the principle of gender equality enshrined in the country's constitution. Stating that her delegation wished to highlight the trilateral cross-learning partnership between Ireland, Liberia and Timor-Leste regarding Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, she said its goal was "learning from others and sharing ideas and strategies on how to move forward promoting and protecting women, their leadership, and interests in both conflict resolution and peace building." Timor-Leste remained committed to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was proud to have Maria Helen Lopes de Jesus Pires as a member of the Committee, serving the 2011-2014 term.

Timor-Leste adopted the Law Against Domestic Violence in 2009 and the Penal Code last year to criminalize most sexual crimes, she said. Sexual and gender-based violence training for police forces was also being carried out, and women comprised 20 per cent of the police force. Additionally, women's participation in society and government on all levels was being addressed through a Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Gender Focal Points in Timor-Leste's ministries. The Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) was implementing a five-year plan for 2010

to 2015 to design and execute policies mainstreaming gender equality across all nine ministries.

FRANKLIN MAKANGA ( Gabon) reiterated his delegation's congratulation to Michelle Bachelet upon her nomination to head UN Women, and welcomed the fact that the composition of the bureau of UN Women would abide by the principle of equitable geographic representation. The election of the members of the bureau would attest to Gabon's wish to see all regions involved in the elaboration and implementation of all gender-related policies.

Gabon had made significant progress in giving women a stronger role in decision-making at different levels, he said. The most telling example came during the political transition that followed the death of President Omar Bongo Ondimba, when the destiny of the country was in the hands of two remarkable women: one as head of state, the other as president of the constitutional court. On the international level, efforts must be directed at respecting political and judicial commitments in favour of the advancement of women, intensification of the struggle against violence against women, and better reproductive health care for women, including access to family planning with a view to reducing maternal mortality.

PALITHA T. B. KOHONA ( Sri Lanka) congratulated Michelle Bachelet on her appointment as the Under-Secretary-General of UN Women and said the international community would embark on the journey with the gender entity "with conviction, faith and solidarity". The year 2010 was an important landmark, as it was the tenth anniversary of the Millennium Goals commitments, as well as the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Despite positive progress made, many aspects across the gender line still needed to be addressed, including discrimination and violence against women. Sri Lanka had integrated the Millennium Goals into its national development agenda and had achieved significant success in education and healthcare, he noted.

His country was fully committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international instruments. He noted that its success in doing so could be attributed to increased sensitivity to women's issues and a firm Government policy that sought to empower women and address their needs. Sri Lanka had also prioritized concern for the welfare of migrant workers and their families, especially the underage children of migrant women. The exploitative, violent and derogatory treatment of migrant workers — particularly women workers in receiving countries — was a serious matter, and he stressed the need to protect their right to a decent work environment. He noted his Government had taken steps to redress issues of unemployment among women, and had begun provide assistance to victims of the war, including war widows and single mothers. Empowering women would not only benefit the individuals concerned, but an entire family and society, as well.

MILORAD ŠĆEPANOVIĆ ( Montenegro), associating himself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, said his country fully supported the establishment of UN Women. He reaffirmed Montenegro's commitment towards achieving the goals of the Beijing Declaration, its Platform for Action and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and ensured that it would take all necessary steps to fully reach gender equality. Considerable progress had been made in the past decade as the country had established an institutional and legal framework to improve gender equality, he said. Moreover, the Government had adopted a law and an action plan on the matter and had taken concrete steps to criminalize family violence.

This year, Montenegro had submitted its first report on the implementation of the CEDAW as an independent State. Gender equality, as a human rights issue, had been increasingly recognized by society as a whole. Recognizing that there were too few women in parliament, his Government intended to intensify efforts to increase women's involvement at all levels of decision-making. To that end, it planned to introduce a 30 per cent quota for women on electoral lists and during the allocation of seats. Finally, he stressed the importance of addressing issues such as domestic violence and violence against women. Continued efforts were needed with regard to labour and employment.

GONZALO GUTIÉRREZ ( Peru) began by noting the various advances regarding women's

rights that had been made this year and reiterating his country's support for the establishment of UN Women, stating that Peru agreed with the new head, Michelle Bachelet, that more leadership and political drive needed to be channelled towards gender equality. To achieve those goals, more financial resources needed to be allocated to the issue and more consistency was needed within the United Nations system. UN Women should continue to support the work of States, taking into account the needs of women on the ground and of middle-income countries. Peru's framework guaranteed gender equality in legislation, such as through its law and plan on equal opportunity; promoted values and behaviours that prevented discrimination, and ensured mechanisms that provided follow-up to its commitments.

Noting that violence against women limited advancement and was a national priority for Peru, he stated that the country's national program delivered services to women who were victims of violence. Programs to disseminate information about sexual harassment and the adoption of rules in the workplace were also created. He highlighted the issue of wood-burning stoves, which affected many women and families in the country, particularly in the Andean region, because of their pollution and health and nutrition consequences. The Government had been working to reduce the number of wood burning stoves to one fifth the current number in order to improve conditions for families who lived in less favourable communities. Further, he stated that it was co-sponsoring resolutions on ending violence against women, as well as on obstetric fistula. He also said that education was the main means to ensure equality, noting that women's participation in the secondary education level was now 10 per cent higher than men's. With regard to the political sphere, women had increased to 29 per cent of legislative posts. He concluded by expressing Peru's aspiration to membership on the executive board of UN women, in order to help promote women's rights and gender equality around the world.

LIBRAN N. CABACTULAN ( Philippines), aligning with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77, said his country's Constitution made it a State policy to ensure the fundamental equality of both men and women. The Philippines had established institutional and legal mechanisms specifically designed to reinforce gender equality and the empowerment of women, including its National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women. That commission, which predated the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Convention, was created in 1975 to provide overall coordination to the national effort. Further, his Government had adopted the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development, a 30 year perspective plan which set strategies to empower women for effective peace work.

His country recognized women as agents of socio-economic growth and change. In that regard, it encouraged their full participation in the economy and prioritized gender-responsive entrepreneurship development. He pointed out that the nation's Magna Carta of Women ensured the protection of women, including migrant women, regardless of their work status. The full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action was crucial to protecting women from violence and human trafficking, among several other issues. Gender equality could only be realized if women and girls "speak with a unified voice" on the national and international level. In that regard, he welcomed the creation of UN Women, as well as the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

PAK TOK HUN (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that, without a clean settlement of the past, the advancement of women in the present and future was impossible. At a testimony meeting in Pyongyang on 12 August, surviving victims of "comfort women" for the Japanese imperial army had demanded an unconditional apology and compensation from the government of Japan. The system of "comfort women," a state policy of Japan in the early half of the past century, was a crime against humanity that had been defined as "military sexual slavery" by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women in 1996, who recommended that Japan accept legal responsibility, make an official apology, pay immediate compensation to the victims, reflect the truth in educational curricula and punish the criminals responsible. That recommendation had not been implemented.

Japan was strongly urged to acknowledge its legal responsibility for all past crimes, including "sexual slavery" carried out by the Japanese imperial army which involved 200,000 women, as well as the forcible drafting of 8.4 million people and the massacre of 1 million Koreans, he said. Japan should also make a sincere apology and pay compensation. Equality between men

and women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was promulgated in law immediately after liberation in 1946; as a result, its women were exercising their rights to the full in all spheres of state and social life.

#### Right of Reply

The representative of Japan, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said the numbers cited by his counterpart from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were totally groundless. Japan had been facing up to its past with sincerity and consistency. It had recognized that the issue of wartime comfort women was a grave issue, and its government had expressed sincere apologies and remorse. Regarding property claims, in the Pyongyang Declaration, the leaders of Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had agreed that, with the normalization of relations, such claims would be waived. Japan would strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take concrete action towards resolving outstanding issues of concern, such as abductions and missiles.

The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea replied that his delegation was extremely unhappy and disappointed with the response of the Japanese delegation, which had sought to mislead the international community by saying that Japan was trying to do its best to resolve the issues. Japan's words of regret had not been followed by specific measures. The issue of comfort women had been discussed in United Nations fora for almost 20 years and it was a very serious crime against humanity. His country had done everything required of it under the Pyongyang Declaration and it had informed Japan of the results of its investigation into missing Japanese nationals. However, for several decades, Japan had shown no tangible willingness to fulfil its responsibility; it should know that the nationals of others were as valuable as its own. Japan could not whitewash the crimes it had committed against Korea.

The representative of Japan reserved the right to refute, at other opportunities, what his counterpart from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had said. The positions of Japan regarding the past had been explained and they would not be repeated in the Committee.

In the afternoon, the Committee moved to its consideration of the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

#### Statement by Executive Director of UNICEF

ANTONY LAKE, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, said that he was pleased to present the Secretary General's report on the progress made toward building a world fit for children, which focused on the critical importance of implementing child rights in early childhood. He asked the Committee to imagine a courtroom somewhere, in which a newborn baby was brought before a stern judge and condemned by that judge to die, or to a life sentence of deprivation, disease and diminished potential. Such a situation was "unimaginable"; however, that was exactly what was happening every day to millions of children in the world's poorest and most disadvantaged places. "Through inattention, through inaction, and through simple ignorance, when we fail to reach these children in the first days and years of their young lives, we slam down the gavel on their future," he said.

It was a violation of the rights of children to deny them the chance to live, learn, grow and thrive, and the international community had a responsibility to protect those rights in the most vulnerable early moments and years of a child's life. One of the most effective ways to affirm the universality of child rights was by universally ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and by implementing its protections in early childhood, underlining that either children would be reached in time to change their lives or a greater price would be paid later to society and at an even higher human cost. "This is the central message of the Secretary General's report: Early childhood provides an unparalleled window of opportunity to make a lasting difference — and we must seize it," he said.

Outlining numerous issues regarding early childhood protection, he said that nutrition in the first 1,000 days of a child's life was critical, or else children were at risk of developing stunting, a

condition that blighted their physical and cognitive development irreversibly. A related issue was breastfeeding, which not only nourished the child's body but promoted emotional growth. Also, birth registration — the simple act of registering the birth of a child also made a difference, since children without established identities were more vulnerable to being left behind. Further, children who participated in early education programmes were more likely to continue in their studies, reach their full potential, and send their own children to school someday. Finally, child protection — something his colleagues would address at greater length. Children exposed at a young age to violent conflict, abuse and exploitation were more vulnerable to multiple deprivations of their basic rights and needs.

Noting that each of those issues had been described at the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, he said that an integrated approach needed to be adopted — one that relied less on top-down solutions than on bottom-up innovations, tailored to individual countries' circumstances and delivered at the community level to those in greatest need. Over 200 million children were not reaching their full potential because of poverty, poor health and nutrition and deficient care. The United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) data revealed widening disparities among key indicators, especially in maternal and child mortality, but also showed investing in early childhood interventions, focused where they were most needed, would result in the highest return on investment, the best long-term outcomes, and a more equitable world. "What better way to reduce inequities than to reach the neediest children in the critical early years, when we know we can have the greatest impact? For that is how we will truly universalize child rights," he said.

Additionally, work to support child rights and to improve children's lives depended on supporting the family and providing parents with social support to address issues of domestic violence, abuse and neglect, he said. "Protecting children's rights is everyone's issue — it is owned by every mother and father... by every community... by every country... by all of us," he said, underlining the need to build a better future for all children.

"So let me end where I began; with the moments — miraculous and vulnerable — when a child's life begins and develops. So much depends on these moments and months. It is up to all of us, not a fictional judge, to make the most of them", he concluded.

In the following question and answer session, the representative of Pakistan asked about the principle of achieving equity in the Millennium Development Goals, while his counterpart from the European Union inquired about equity and early childhood development.

Mr. LAKE said equity, while not a UNICEF invention, was deeply imbedded in the agency's charter and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF did not have a trademark on the concept, but it was convinced that equity was an important goal. Many studies had shown that, as many nations made progress on the Goals, disparities between the better-off and most disadvantaged countries had been growing. That gap needed to be addressed so as to avoid less-just societies. UNICEF had carried out its own exhaustive and very solid study, based on a lot of modelling and peer-review, which showed that it was not only right to concentrate on the most deprived areas and children, but also the most practical option, because it was the most cost-effective. Return on investment was greater in going into such areas, even given the cost of reaching those areas.

Regarding early childhood development, in terms of equity, in the poorest areas, there needed to be integrated approaches that combined nutrition, education, health, security and so forth. Failure in any one of those sectors could spell failure for the others. If a child was sick, for instance, he or she would be less educated, and with less education; then, his or her community could not emerge from the poverty that was the source of the illness. Such an approach had to be integrated not only within the United Nations, but also with governments and bilateral programmes.

"Integration is the key to the what-do-we-do," he said. As for the question of where, at UNICEF and elsewhere, people had been emphasizing the importance of going into the poorest communities and drawing on the strengths of those communities. Children most deprived of their rights, the ones most deserving of attention, were to be found in the most forgotten corners of the world; going into those areas meant acting in the most cost-effective way. More and more agencies,

non-governmental organizations and civil society groups were supporting that approach. When the boards of UNICEF and its sister agencies meet next year, equity will be on the agenda, and hopefully it would become "a new common wisdom" for addressing the rights of children.

The representative of Switzerland asked how UNICEF intended to cooperate with UN Women, and how it would coordinate its activities with that new entity, particularly with regard to girl-child protection and education. Mr. LAKE replied that the Secretary-General's appointment of Michelle Bachelet was among the most important and welcome appointments of recent years, and UN Women would be playing "a tremendously important role". He said he has already discussed the question briefly with her, as well as the possibility of more integrated approaches at the important country-level. Although UNICEF was called the Children's Fund, in fact, children's and women's rights and issues were inseparable; the recent high-level meeting on the Goals had demonstrated strongly the relationship between the fourth and fifth Goals. If there was to be progress on the former (children's health), UNICEF had to concentrate on the latter (maternal health). In the same sense, education for girls was important, not only for future productivity, but because an educated female was more likely to marry later, less likely to die in childbirth, and more likely to have healthy children.

#### Statement by Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict

RADHIKA COOMARASWAMY, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, said her office had screened the film "Children of War" yesterday. That screening was part of its Zero under Eighteen campaign for universal ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. She said there had been notable success last year in saving children from being exploited as soldiers around the world. Highlighting several achievements, she noted the release and discharge of 3,000 children from Maoist cantonments in Nepal and that the Justice and Equality Movement in Sudan had signed a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF granting child protection monitors access to its camps to assist in the release of children.

With regard to sexual violence, she said this year was the first time that parties committing such violence against children were included in the annexes to the report. Her office was in discussion with UNICEF and the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in conflict to issue guidance notes to the field in order to help Country Task Forces capture the nature and scale of violations being committed on the ground. Continuing, she said her office was also working to galvanize attention and support for dilemmas faced by internally displaced children (IDP). Recalling a visit to an IDP camp during her recent trip to Kabul, she said a young male noted that international visitors came and went, but nothing ever changed in the camps. "His words were a reminder of the fact that disgruntled children in such camps are always susceptible to recruitment by armed groups".

Great challenges remained despite accomplishments made over the last year, as recent events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had shown that sexual violence against women and children was a brutal reality in many conflicts. Many sexual violations against children were committed by non-State actors who often recruit children, she noted. Many were listed in the report and the only way to de-list was to enter into an action plan. Governments must facilitate that process by allowing the United Nations to access vulnerable groups for humanitarian needs, such as protection of children. Despite all efforts, there were persistent violators who had been listed yearly in the report. It was now important to move toward targeted measures against some of those recalcitrant parties. He was pleased to inform the Committee that the Sanctions Committee for the Democratic Republic of the Congo had heard submission from her office and that the charges of recruitment and use of children were added as grounds for sanctioning certain individuals.

One of the main challenge facing partners on the ground was the issue of resource gaps, which left them unable to provide the necessary services for children. Best practice called for sustained engagement with the affected children for a two year period. For that reason, she called for both national and international donors to follow through with reintegration efforts and to respond effectively to calls for increased, reliable and long-term funding for such programmes. She went to address emerging challenges, such as attacks of schools and on girls travelling to school.

On the issue of justice and children affected by armed conflict, she said their participation in justice proceedings must be carefully managed so as not to endanger or re-traumatize them. She noted that former child soldiers often came before the justice system as perpetrators, and there was a need to agree on a set of principles. The International Criminal Court and international practice had made it clear that children should not be tried for war crimes and, for any lesser, charge the Beijing Principles on Juvenile Justice must be satisfied. "We expect all countries, especially those who have been in the forefront of the struggle or the rights of children, to respect those principles", she said. With regard to children in detention for minor charges, she urged the international community to move towards rehabilitation and education.

Finally, she said the Millennium Goals indicators for children were among the worst in armed conflict zones. In that regard, she hoped to work with Anthony Lake's "Equity Campaign" for UNICEF by identifying children in conflict zones as one of the most vulnerable groups requiring priority funding from the international community. With the universal ratification of the Optional Protocol with regard to the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, there would be an international moral consensus against the practice and those who did engage in such activities would be considered outlaws in the world at large. "A child in pain is everyone's child and what we are fighting for today is for the world's children", she declared.

#### Question and Answer Session

The representative of Thailand inquired about the relationship on the field between the Special Representative, UNICEF and special Rapporteur's; she also asked about the process of reporting and verification of information. The observer of Palestine asked what steps have been taken by the Special Representative in connection with the detention of boys and girls by Israel. The representative of Norway asked about cooperation between the Special Representative and her counterpart for sexual violence in conflict, Margot Wallström; he also asked how the Special Representative was involved in the mainstreaming of children's rights in peacekeeping situations.

Ms. COOMARASWAMY said the Security Council was engaged in a "big experiment" in monitoring and reporting; country task forces that had been established with clear mandates, and guidance was being sent to the field, and no problems were anticipated. With regard to verification, any allegations had to be verified within the United Nations system wherever possible, and if that were not possible, the other credible sources would be used. In 98 per cent of cases, information was verified by United Nations sources. Regarding Palestine and Israel, a correspondence has been underway with the Israeli government and the Special Representative, who hoped to visit Israel on that issue alone in the coming months. Children should not be kept in military detention and it was hoped that progress could be made on the issue "regardless of what happens in the political process".

Regarding sexual violence in conflict, she said she has been working closely with Ms. Wallström's office. Whether monitoring was expanded beyond children to include adults depended on the mandate given by the Security Council. Different models had been formulated at the technical level and it was hoped that something could be finalized in the next few months.

The representative of Pakistan asked how the Special Representative balanced the mandates of the General Assembly and the Security Council, and whether there was any conflict between them. He also inquired how important it was to have a knowledge of the local cultural context, and whether her team reflected geographic diversity. The representative of the European Union asked about practical methods for the elaboration of the Paris Commitments and the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated With Armed Forces or Armed Groups. His counterpart from Switzerland inquired about the need for a set of principles, based on the International Criminal Court and other tribunals, regarding boys as perpetrators of crimes in conflict situations.

Ms. COOMARASWAMY noted that her report to the Security Council was also sent to the General Assembly; such "dual reporting" was not seen as a conflict; indeed it was complementary, as the work at the Security Council furthered the mandate from the General Assembly. The Special



Representative recalled that she had been arguing strongly that a Canadian boy held at Guantanamo should not be prosecuted for war crimes; she had also been working closely with United States forces on the protection of children in Afghanistan. While many things happen in Africa and Asia, many countries of the world were engaged in military operations, and she has been looking at the situation in Israel and Palestine. She was well aware of the cultural context, but war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide had no cultural justification, nor did grave crimes against children.

The Special Representative hoped to move forward on the Paris principles. The reintegration of children who have taken part in conflict was very crucial, but there would be problems in the future if those children could not be reintegrated because proper resources and funding was lacking. She looked forward to going to Brussels to review European Union guidelines. She was also in favour of principles to govern the detention of children, including how long they could be held and where. That said, children should not stand trial for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide; it was not children who started wars.

The representative of Egypt asked if there was a need to move further in the Security Council and the General Assembly; he also asked what could be done about a lack of resources. His counterpart from Algeria inquired about sanctions for those who violated children's rights; he also asked if there might be a need for additional resolutions guided by international conventions that would explicitly refer to the protection of civilians by States in armed conflict.

She replied that it had been a year of consolidation and "housekeeping," with consultants hired to draft guidelines for the field. In terms of resources, the concern was not so much a lack of resources, but rather that resources were not being matched to best practices. Donors may give money to train children in mechanics or sewing for six months, but there was a risk that, after that period, those children would be re-recruited. To reintegrate a child who had been carrying a gun and killing people into his or her home and community was a long process. Regarding sanctions, 19 persistent violators had been named consistently for the past five years; the Democratic Republic of the Congo Sanctions Committee had been the only Sanctions Committee to act on the recommendations made.

#### Statement by Special Representative on Violence against Children

Presenting her initial report to the Committee, MARTA SANTOS PAIS, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, said she was committed to the United Nations campaign to reach universal ratification by 2012 of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The report provided an overview of key developments and initiatives she had promoted since her appointment. Even as violence against children had gained greater attention amongst government institutions and the public, millions of children still suffered unacceptable levels of violence every year. Young children were at a special risk and violence left dramatic scars on all children, including low self-esteem, emotional distress, and depression. At times, it led them to take risks and act aggressively.

After meeting with young people from around the world, she learned that children were concerned about the lack of information about what to do and where to go after violent incidents. They were fearful and frustrated at the persistence of the challenges, yet recognized their role in sparking change.

The Human Rights Council had asked for a report detailing the challenges linked to the counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms for violence against children. She was preparing the report with the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child prostitution and Child Pornography. An expert consultation was held with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva earlier this month. Expanding upon the experience and good practices of other organizations and United Nations entities, the meeting turned out three conclusions. One focused on the urgency of developing child sensitive counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms. Another conclusion focused on ensuring these mechanisms' availability, accessibility, legitimacy and effectiveness. The third crucial conclusion showed that these institutions' success depended on the safeguards they would uphold and the trust they would

generate among children. "Children needed to feel reassured that they are listened to in an ethical, safe, and confidential manner," she said.

Ms. Pais added that sound data and research were indispensable to breaking the conspiracy of silence surrounding violence against children, to address its root causes and build upon children's experiences and recommendations. This was a priority of her mandate and she would host a side event with key partners on this issue on 15 October. Legislation was also indispensable in providing protection for victims and witnesses and legitimizing counselling, reporting and redress. She noted that legal reform was gaining momentum and 29 countries had introduced a legal ban on all forms of violence, including corporal punishment in the home. Unfortunately, for too many children, violence continued to be used as a lawful practice in the education system and in care institutions. "This is an area where change is urgently needed," she said.

#### Question and Answer

The representative of the United States asked for more information about the Inter Agency Working Group on Violence against Children and about the United Nations efforts to integrate the work of various agencies, such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), concerning violence against children.

The representative of Switzerland asked whether any difficulties had been encountered with regard to collaboration with other United Nations bodies and what lessons had been learned in terms of improving cooperation between players, whether they are teachers, the media, parents, and so forth. Also, with respect to the recommendation on establishing a national program to collect, analyze and diffuse information on violence against children, what was the best way to adopt a holistic approach and use the available information?

The representative of Malaysia, stating that violence against children was related to home life, economic opportunity and poverty, asked how the Special Representative was addressing these factors either through her own mandate or through other United Nations agencies?

The representative of the European Union asked how to achieve concrete steps with regard to child reporting mechanisms, as well as about the relevance of and follow-up to the roadmap adopted in the Hague concerning the elimination of violence against children, including participation by Member States.

The representative of Brazil, discussing the country's draft legislation to punish those who exercised corporal punishment in order to encourage them to apply positive discipline, asked how governments could best address possible resistance that might arise from the application of similar laws, including from concerned families?

The representative of Norway, referring to the Special Representative's report stating that long-term support and funding were indispensable and that additional funding was required, said that, having provided more than half a million United States dollars, Norway wished to know how the Special Representative's office was working to secure sufficient funding.

The representative of Cuba asked about prevention of violence against children, which was one of the Special Representative's top priorities, and the coordination of United Nations mechanisms to this end.

The representative of Chile, commenting on the two areas of girls and bullying, and stating that sexual violence against girls in schools must be addressed through prevention and gender-sensitive education, asked how the Special Representative planned to address bullying and to put safeguards for the victims in place.

The representative of India asked for additional clarification about the issue of complaint mechanisms concerning violence against children, including what work was being done in planning and developing these mechanisms, and whether this mandate from the Human Rights Council was different from discussions in Geneva and the convention on the rights of the child.

The observer of Palestine, stating that Palestinian children had been suffering violence under occupation, including death and injury, and that it was high time to address the plight of children under foreign occupation, asked why was yet to be included in the Special Representative's reports.

MS. SANTOS PAIS answered the questions, grouping some of them together, starting with the general issue of coordination. She stated that the mandate of the Special Representative concerning violence against children was defined by the Member States and was not designed to replace other structures, institutions or agencies, but to work as a bridge-builder with national governments, civil society, and so forth, and to build upon processes that could accelerate progress.

She said she felt privileged to be chairing the Inter Agency Working Group on Violence against Children, in which numerous agencies participated, and worked with four core agencies: UNICEF, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the World Health Organization. She said that it was only natural that she collaborate with the ILO and UNICEF, both in their Headquarters and in the field, preparing missions, finding areas of common action, and considering social norms that prevented progress.

Regarding the Hague conference roadmap, she stated that it was promising and that she wished to illustrate how groups that shared a normative framework and commitment to protecting children could work together and be mutually supportive, particularly in terms of changing legislation and developing national action plans, which were her priorities. She said that the leadership of Governments would make the difference regarding the roadmap, but that one outcome would be a high-level group to promote awareness of it.

Responding to Switzerland, she said that cooperation among groups in promoting research and data was particularly important, as it assisted in the development of agenda. Cooperation allowed different disciplines, which often forgot they were linked, to share their ways of dealing with problems.

Responding to Malaysia's and Chile's questions regarding addressing root causes that facilitated violence, she stated that poverty was one of the main factors — because the lack of access to social services created conditions that more often led to violence — which was why support to poor families with young children was necessary and the theme of narrowing disparities early in a child's life was so critical.

Regarding bullies, she noted that education and schooling could be the best environments for teaching respect, but also the place where children suffered violence. Up to 65 per cent of children endured bullying in some countries, leading to psychological harm and, sometimes, to suicide. However, very little data was available and more research was necessary regarding the factors leading to bullying, its affects on different groups, and possible solutions. They also needed to speak with victims who could discuss what the trigger factors were, so that they could be prevented.

Concerning reporting and complaint mechanisms, she said that a wide diversity of mechanisms existed, but they were fragmented and not incorporated into one robust national plan. Initiatives from governments, civil society, and even children existed, but the first challenge was to understand how they could be brought together. She hoped that, in all countries, there would be clear legislation regarding how these mechanisms would be available to children.

Answering Brazil, she said legislation against corporal punishment was not meant to give a clear message of what was not acceptable and that it was not meant to punish members of a family, but, rather, to convince everyone that there were alternative models and positive ways achieve better results.

In response to Norway, she said that they had an approved mandate and that their funding was from voluntary contributions. Although there was a belief in times of economic crisis that the funding of some issues could wait, they counted on funding because it allowed them to treat victims,

find remedies and act as an independent advocate.

The representative of Venezuela then asked about the voluntary trust fund to support the Special Representative's mandate, about contributions to this fund, and about criteria for using this fund and setting priorities.

Ms. PAIS responded that she appreciated the ability to discuss agenda items with the Member States that nine governments had contributed to the voluntary fund to date and that she was confident there would be further progress.

Lastly, responding to Palestine's earlier question, she stressed that the issue of children suffering violence under occupation would be addressed by her mandate. She also acknowledged the steps that Palestine had taken regarding a new law that would give high profile to such children, and stated that she looked forward to celebrating the outcome of the process.

#### Statement by Chair of Child Rights Committee

Introducing the report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, YANGHEE LEE, Committee Chairperson, said the current backlog of reports pending review by the Committee was largely a temporary challenge related to the submission of reports under the two Optional Protocols. However, she was pleased with their ratification, as that signified State parties' commitment to combating the "abhorrent" crimes they covered. She urged States parties to pay due attention to the challenges the treaty body system faced due to the backlog of reports.

Nothing that the universal ratification campaign was launched on the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Optional Protocols of 25 May this year, she stressed that effective measures at the national level were required to improve the protection of children. The campaign, she said, addressed problematic aspects, such as the failure to review and include specific provisions in penal legislation, resulting in impunity for those acts. Somalia and the United States still had not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and she reiterated the Committee's appeal that they ratify it as soon as possible.

She went on to highlight the ongoing development of a third Optional Protocol as "exciting and positive", and noted collaboration efforts with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In closing, she reminded States that realizing the Millennium Development Goals was a first step in meeting broader human rights standards. Adherence to international human right standards — including to the principles of non-discrimination, meaningful participation and accountability — could accelerate progress towards achieving the Goals. That was of particular importance in realizing the goals of reduced child mortality and universal primary education, being mindful that realization of human rights for all went beyond the reaching of quantified targets. To that end, she encouraged United Nations agencies to coordinate their efforts and jointly assess progress and remaining obstacles.

#### Statement by Special Rapporteur on Sale of Children

NAJAT M'JID MAALLA, Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, then introduced her report (document A/65/221). Some progress has been made, thanks to a number of studies, into the evolution of all three concerns. Sexual exploitation of boys and girls was taking place in all States, in all regions, in all realms, at all ages. Certain forms of exploitation were being driven by the Internet, new technologies, and the expansion of travel and tourism. The sale of children for sexual exploitation, forced labour and illegal adoption had been growing. While girls remained most affected, a certain number of boys were victims of prostitution, pornography and sexual tourism; their low numbers could be explained by taboos and legislation banning homosexuality. Globally, underground criminal exploitation of children had become increasingly organized, while the demand for sexual services from children had persisted, supported by an environment of tolerance, complicity and impunity.

That being said, she added, the real scale of the problem remained difficult to assess, due to weak systems of information, a low number of incidents reported and the clandestine nature of

the offences. The underpinning causes were multidimensional and complex, ranging from poverty, vulnerability, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, humanitarian crises, communications technology, social norms that tolerated exploitation, organized crime and a growing demand for the sexual services of children. While 137 States had ratified the Protocol, and 29 remained to do so, many challenges remained in order to take stock of the scope of the problem. For instance, there was a need for more reliable and standardized data. The laws in some countries did not clearly define or criminalize all forms of sexual exploitation of children, access to police services and justice was not always guaranteed, and many countries had yet to put into place effective and easy-to-access services to assist victims. The complex nature of the problem was not being fully taken into account, while children themselves needed to be given a bigger role in developing and implementing child protection strategies and policies.

#### Question and Answer Session

The Special Rapporteur then fielded questions and comments. The representative of Nigeria, referring to the “psychoanalytical aspect” of the sexual exploitation of children, asked how the problem could be addressed in schools; he also noted how children could be seen in Internet cafes logging onto “shocking” kinds of websites, and asked how and why adults found child pornography attractive. His colleague from the United States asked what could be done on the part of Governments to engage with businesses to address the problem. Her counterpart from the European Union asked if the universal registration of children at birth might help make children less vulnerable to sexual exploitation. The representative of Mexico asked what initiatives the Special Rapporteur had undertaken to approach the private sector and promote self-regulation. The representative of Cuba inquired about the relationship between poverty and different forms of child exploitation.

The Special Rapporteur said that education took place not only in schools; friends, family and people in general had a role to play. However, schools were in a position to inform children about Internet access. Children had become victims because they had been watching explicit images; they had been experiencing a “hyper-sexualisation”, with access to pornography that was very violent and unsuitable for their age group. Schools could also warn about the danger of solicitation of children. Since children were more able to master the Internet, they could help educate other children. It was very important to inform children and warn them for their own protection.

Demand was a complex question; it was coming not only from perverts, but also from occasional consumers, via an industry that brought in millions and billions in profits, she said. Some studies had been carried out on demand. One could not only talk about supply; attention had to be given to demand as well. The private sector had an enormous role to play — not just telecom operators, but also banks, the media, travel services and cultural companies. The Special Rapporteur was fully supportive of a directive on the issue that the European Union was working on. The importance of universal ratification of the Protocol was something that was being worked on, day by day. The lack of registration created vulnerability and, in that sense, universal registration of children was important.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

**For information media • not an official record**