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UNICEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IN THIRD COMMITTEE, SAYS 18,000 CHILDREN

STILL DYING EVERY DAY, DESPITE DRAMATIC FALL IN DEATH RATE

Other Child-Rights Officials in Presentations as Delegates Begin Discussion

Child deaths had fallen dramatically from 12 million a year in 1990 to 6.9 million in 2011, but 18,000 children were still dying every day, the head of the United Nations Children's Fund told the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) today, urging States to design policies and programmes targeted at "hard-to-reach" populations, such as children in armed conflict.

"We best measure a society's true worth by how it treats its youngest members - the girls and boys who would one day become tomorrow's parents, citizens and leaders," said Anthony Lake, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and one of the five senior officials who launched the Committee's general discussion on children's rights this afternoon.

He said the global campaign for the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention of the Rights of the Child had resulted in 166 States joining the Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and 20 more States had ratified the Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, bringing the total to 152.

"But perhaps the most rewarding measurement of our success is lives saved," he said, noting that an estimated 90 million young lives had been saved over the past two decades. Yet, 18,000 children died every day, mostly from preventable causes. Millennium Development Goal 4 - cutting the rate of under-five mortality by two thirds - would not be achieved until 2028 if the current trends continued, he warned. Citing the UNICEF study "Narrowing the Gaps", he said better results could be achieved more cost-effectively and rapidly when policies and programmes were designed not around the easiest-to-reach, but around the hardest-to-reach, the most disadvantaged and marginalized.

Leila Zerrougui, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, said that in addition to its ongoing work with the European Union, her Office had signed a partnership agreement with the African Union and would continue to reach out to other regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Office had initiated a global campaign to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces by 2016, she said, underlining also the need to integrate child-protection concerns into mediation processes and peace agreements.

Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, emphasized that the risk of violence against children remained present in every setting, as shown in "irrefutable" figures, such as the 168 million boys and girls involved in exploitative work or the 11 million girls involved in domestic work. Child trafficking was a serious form of violence, as children were enslaved into prostitution, sold into marriage, coerced to work in plantations or deep-sea fishing, forced to beg on the street, or recruited by criminal networks. Violence was associated with poor law, weak law enforcement, high levels of organized crime and homicide rates, and a culture of impunity, she said.

Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, said preventive measures had so far not guaranteed long-term protection for children due to a lack of coordination among the different actors involved. In fact, preventive actions often entailed sporadic and scattered activities that failed to address the various underlying factors in a systematic, holistic and sustainable manner.

Kristen Sandberg, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, said that body continued to improve its working methods. It had reviewed and adopted its concluding observations on the reports submitted by 34 States parties.

Earlier today, speakers representing 27 countries and observer organizations took the floor as the Committee concluded its general discussion on gender equality and women's empowerment. The representative of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), speaking also for two other Rome-based agencies - the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) - was among the many speakers who addressed issues relating to the economic empowerment of women.

He noted that women represented 43 per cent of the agricultural workforce worldwide and as much as 70 per cent in some countries. The Rome-based agencies remained committed to implementing the five-year programme aimed at accelerating empowerment of rural women, a joint undertaking with UN-Women. They accorded priority to training female small-business owners so as to increase their productivity; supporting maternal and child nutrition by providing supplementary food and promoting nutrition-sensitive gardening; and enhancing gender-responsive delivery of agricultural services.

Also participating in both debates today were speakers representing Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Marshall Islands (for the Pacific Islands Forum), Bangladesh, Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bahrain, Haiti, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Tonga, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malawi, Venezuela, Montenegro, United Republic of Tanzania, Honduras, Botswana, Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba (on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), Malaysia (on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and Barbados (on behalf of the Caribbean Community).

Others were observers for the State of Palestine, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Representatives of Israel and the State of Palestine spoke in exercise of the right of reply.

The Committee will reconvene at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 17 October, to continue its general discussion on children's rights. It is also expected to take action on draft resolutions.

Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met this morning to conclude its general discussion on the advancement of women. For background information see Press Release ([GA/SHC/4069](#)). It was also expected to begin its consideration of the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

Before the Committee were reports of the Secretary-General on "Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (document [A/68/257](#)); "The girl child" (document [A/68/263](#)); "Collaboration within the United Nations system on child protection" (document [A/68/253](#)); and "Follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children" (document [A/68/269](#)).

Also under consideration were the "Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict" (document [A/68/267](#)), "Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children" (document [A/68/274](#)), and the "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography" (document [A/68/275](#)).

Statements

RANIA TALAL A. ABDULBAQI(Saudi Arabia) said her Government had taken several measures to ensure women's advancement, from primary school to college and beyond, so they would be qualified to

hold the highest—ranking positions in Government agencies. Women's enrolment in institutions of higher learning had exceeded that of men in 2011, totalling 473,735, she said, recalling that only four female students had been enrolled in 1961. The Government had taken many decisions, including one allowing women to occupy no less than 20 per cent of seats on the Advisory Council, in addition to the right to contest and vote in municipal councils. Pointing out that many texts and concepts of *sharia* (Islamic law) forbade any abuse or injustice against women, she said her country had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and supported women's rights through its seat on the Executive Board of UN-Women as well as its contribution of \$2 million to the Gender Entity's activities.

DHAMMIKA SEMASINGHE(Sri Lanka), associating himself with the Group of 77 and China, said since girls were born into and grew up in a largely egalitarian society, it was no accident that Sri Lanka had elected the world's first female Prime Minister in 1960. Since then, the quality of life of women and girls had improved significantly, as shown by the decrease in infant and maternal mortality, as well as in the achievement of gender parity in primary, secondary and tertiary education. "Human development is however a necessary precondition to creating greater opportunities, especially in rural areas," she said, underlining the country's commitment to cross—cutting interaction of health care with basic education, improved water and sanitation, malaria control, and integrated rural development, to create an enabling environment for the rural population to achieve high human development indicators.

RICHARD NDUHUURA (Uganda), associating himself with the Group of 77 and the African Group, underlined his Government's commitment to ensuring that women and gender issues were mainstreamed into all development processes, from the planning stages through implementation to evaluation. Education was a major tool in raising awareness about the needs and rights of the girl child. On eliminating all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence and sexual violence in conflict situations, he highlighted two laws, the Domestic Violence Act and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation, saying Uganda was committed to formulating and implementing additional policies and measure to address gender inequality and women's empowerment.

AMATLAIN ELIZABETH KABUA(Marshall Islands), speaking for the Pacific Islands Forum, called for accelerated national efforts to address gender inequality and support women with disabilities. Special measures to improve women's access to employment and economic opportunities had been adopted, and sexual reproductive health services had improved. However, higher education for women had not translated into better employment outcomes, and nor had their participation in Parliament risen, she said.

The lack of adequate and accurate data was a significant barrier to the implementation of commitments already made, she said, warning that "decision-makers and implementers alike will continue to struggle", in its absence. Calling upon the United Nations system to provide further support to national and regional efforts, she cited the joint statement issued by the Pacific Islands Forum leaders and the Secretary-General, saying it committed to enhanced cooperation through a broad range of efforts. The Forum was asking for "continued efforts to make some very practical connections", she added.

ABULKALAM ABDUL MOMEN(Bangladesh), associating himself with the Group of 77, said his Government focused, among other things, on women's education and developing their skills as the necessary foundations to ensure their inclusion in national economic plans, providing completely free education for girls up to the twelfth grade. It contributed to women's enterprises and entrepreneurship, by facilitating access to banking and credit, and to the political empowerment of women. The Global Gender Gap Report 2012 had, in fact, ranked Bangladesh eighth in the world in terms of women's political empowerment, he pointed out.

MARIA CRISTINA PERCEVAL(Argentina) said her Government encouraged the presence of women in social and political life, through decent work and integral access to health, particularly reproductive and sexual services, and legislation. However, laws were not enough, she said, emphasizing that they needed implementation. A cultural shift must take place in order to enable the inclusion of women in all aspects of public life. The crises of 2008 had greatly impacted the living conditions of women and their access to health and security. The lesson learned in Argentina was that such crises called for concrete actions, "counter—cyclic" policies and other positive steps to ensure that vulnerable groups did not continue to live in such harsh conditions. Equality was not only an ethical principle, it also had an economic dimension, she stressed. Aside from specific indicators to identify achievements and areas of development, a gender perspective should be included in all goals of the post—2015 development agenda, she said.

DRAGANA ANĐELIĆ(Bosnia and Herzegovina), associating herself with the European Union, said the Law on Gender Equality was her country's main instrument for implementing the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination. The Government had used it as the basis upon which to create an action plan to translate its commitments into concrete deeds, she said, adding that the Government had adopted a dual approach, focusing on both gender equality and the empowerment of women, while investing significant resources into developing women—friendly public policies.

Ms. ALANEZI (Bahrain) said her Government had made it a priority to empower women to become equal partners in the family, community and the Government. As part of its reform measures, it had established the Supreme Council for Women to enhance the status of women, thereby enabling them to take part in political, social and economic activities. The Council had created a nation-building programme with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with a focus on women's participation. It had spared no effort, reducing the number of unemployed women and providing support, including training and loans, for those seeking work. Women's special needs had been incorporated into the comprehensive national development programme of Bahrain, which would celebrate the Day for Women on 1 December, she said, pointing out that since its accession to the Convention in 2002, it had always submitted its reports on time.

NICOLE ROMULUS(Haiti), associating herself with the Group of 77, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) said women in her country fought daily for their independence, while also facing economic challenges, natural catastrophes and violence. Economic independence was therefore of key importance in enabling those resilient women to be able to play a central role in national development. More than 50 per cent of Haitian women were employed in trade, the hotel industry, community service and agriculture, among the highest rates in the region, she noted. The Government had put an ambitious plan in place, through which \$76 million had been dedicated to improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups, providing them with assistance in education, health, food support and transportation, among other services. Haiti had also established specific institutions for the promotion of women's rights, such as the Ministry for the Status of Women and Women's Rights, back in 1994, she recalled.

EI MON SWAI (Myanmar), associating herself with the Group of 77 and with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), pointed to her Government's commitment to enhancing the role of women and to support fully their development and empowerment by implementing its targeted National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women. She also underlined Myanmar's commitment to ending human trafficking by closely cooperating with its neighbours in the Mekong region and by empowering women and girls by, among other things, providing better education, alleviating poverty, creating job opportunities and ensuring the provision of microfinancing for their livelihoods.

HAWARIAT G. SELASSIE TEFAY (Ethiopia), associating himself with the Group of 77 and the African Group, said his Government had adopted a broad spectrum of new provisions penalizing trafficking in women and children into domestic criminal law. To end human trafficking, Ethiopia had concluded bilateral agreements with Kenya, Djibouti, Sudan, Yemen and Kuwait. More than 83 per cent of its population lived in rural areas, with women accounting for half. Ethiopia's economy was dominated by smallholder agriculture, with women comprising a large proportion of the labour force. The Government had focused on smallholder agriculture and the welfare of rural women, who were the foundation for its efforts to fulfil its commitment attain the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those on poverty and reducing hunger, he said. According to the recent household income and consumption survey, Ethiopia's rural poverty index had declined from 39.3 per cent in the 2004—2005 period to 30.4 per cent in 2010—2011.

MAHE'ULI'ULI SANDHURST TUPOUNIUA(Tonga), associating himself with the Group of 77 and China, said his country supported the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005—2015, which served as a benchmark for Pacific island countries to promote gender equality for sustainable development in the region. Tonga was focused on equitable access to economic assets and employment, increased leadership on the part of women and the creation of an enabling environment for mainstreaming gender issues across Governments policies, programmes and services, among other issues. The Government was committed to promoting women's participation at all levels of decision-making, he added. One of Tonga's many initiatives in that respect was UNDP's four-year Tonga Governance Strengthening Project, aimed at promoting women's participation in the districts, in Parliament and in high-level positions by consolidating the efforts of Parliament, the Electoral Commission and civil society.

SANJA ZOGRAFSKA-KRSTESKA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), associating herself with the European Union, said that countries wishing to advance rapidly must rely on the potential of their female populations by stimulating their growth through education, empowerment and increased political

participation at all levels. At the national level, the Government's establishment of a minimum quota of 30 per cent women candidates on party lists of parliamentary election candidates had resulted in enhanced dialogue with citizens through increased public meetings and debates, he said. However, fewer women were employed in the local administration, in public companies and on their executive boards, which made more local awareness—raising and training necessary.

CHARLES P. MSOSA (Malawi), associating himself with the Group of 77, the African Group and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said his country had registered limited and uneven progress in its pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). "Gender equality and the empowerment of women is a development goal," he said, adding that for that reason, Malawi, in cooperation with development partners and civil society, had adopted the MDG Acceleration Framework Action Plan, a tool for accelerating action on lagging targets. The Framework had identified, among other priority areas, improving girls' school attendance and retention in school, enhancing the economic status of women, and reducing gender-based violence. Malawi had appointed more than 100 women to influential positions, as demonstrated by the appointment of the country's first female President.

VERÓNICA CALCINARI VAN DER VELDE (Venezuela), associating herself with the Group of 77 and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, said the feminization of poverty was a source of great concern for her country. Equality and empowerment, as well as an equal and fair international system were necessary conditions for the full realization of women's rights. Venezuela had promoted and implemented a series of public policies, plans and programmes focused on gender equality and its transversal application across different national entities, she said. A national referendum had ensured that the Constitution did not use sexist language. Further, the Constitution established the enjoyment of women's rights, such as the recognition of domestic work as a generator of income that also created social well-being. Venezuela could also count on specific national institutions that ensured women's rights and guaranteed their implementation, such as the Ministry of People's Power for Women, the National Institute for Women, Development Bank for Women, and the Misión Madres del Barrio.

MILORAD ŠĆEPANOVIĆ (Montenegro), associating himself with the European Union, said his Government had set ambitious goals for 2015, aiming for 50 per cent employment among women while holding down their unemployment rate at 9 per cent. The goal of ensuring women's participation in local and national elected bodies at the national and local levels, including parliamentary seats and ministerial positions in the Government, had been set at 30 per cent. The new Action Plan for the Achievement of Gender Equality would seek effectively to address remaining challenges. Moreover, the elimination of stereotypes and prejudices about the role of women needed more attention, he said, adding that his country firmly supported implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

TUVAKO NATHANIEL MANONGI (United Republic of Tanzania) highlighted his country's efforts to advance women's status in economic and political participation as well as measures it was undertaking to address issues related to violence and maternal and reproductive health. The Government had continued to allocate funds for programmes aimed at empowering women economically, with credit provided through the Women Development Fund. The Constitution stipulated that women should make up no less than 30 per cent of members in Parliament. In 2010, women occupied eight ministerial posts, or 27.5 per cent, up from four in 2004. Various measures had been taken to eliminate and prevent violence against women and girls. Another area of concern was maternal health. When a woman undertook her biological role of becoming pregnant and underwent childbirth, the society had an obligation to fulfil her basic human rights and that of her child. The Government had increased their access to healthcare services.

DULCE SÁNCHEZ (Honduras), endorsing the statement of the Group of 77 and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, said that her country was working to eliminate discrimination against women, including by adopting a national plan for gender equality. Those and other initiatives encouraged the active participation of women on equal footing with men. A significant achievement for her country had been the implementation of a management system that promoted and institutionalized policies on gender equality. Honduras had also registered an increase in the number of women and girls receiving basic education in urban and rural areas. Further, women's political participation had been ensured through an amendment to an existing law, which had increased to 40 per cent the quota of women candidates for decision-making positions and as leader of political parties. Despite those achievements much still needed to be done. Honduras wished to see a greater number of women in technology and education. She supported the valuable work of UN—Women and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

CHARLES THEMBANI NTWAAGAE (Botswana), associating himself with the Group of 77 and China, the African Group and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that CEDAW and

the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action continued to provide a basis for action by Governments and other stakeholders. Despite norms and standards set by those instruments, the international community still had a long way to go before women could be said to be fully enjoying fundamental rights, freedoms and dignity that guaranteed their well-being and the realization of their full potential. The government-sponsored Women's Economic Empowerment Programme had disbursed 14.8 million pula to more than 1,220 beneficiaries to start income—generating projects in 2012. The support had been extended to include persons with disabilities.

SOMAIA BARGHOUTI, an observer of the State of Palestine, said that she was addressing the Committee for the first time following the historic decision by the General Assembly to accord Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. Despite many significant achievements in the advancement and empowerment of women, many challenges remained. Such challenges were even more formidable for Palestinian women, who had been living too long under the most unbearable, tragic situation as a result of the continued Israeli military occupation, for more than 46 years. Their status had been greatly impacted by the overall deterioration of the political, economic and social conditions of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, the territory constituting the State of Palestine. The fact that Israel had never been held accountable for its crimes had surely fostered the continuation and escalation of its oppressive policies and measures against the whole Palestinian population, including women and children. The international community, in particular the United Nations, must take concrete measures in accordance with the Organization's Charter, international law and relevant resolutions.

MELISSA ANN MARIE BOISSIERE(Trinidad and Tobago), associating herself with the Group of 77, CELAC and CARICOM, said her delegation would continue to contribute to the expansion of the discourse on the important role of women in promoting and maintaining peace and security. In that regard, it would once again present, during the current session of the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) a draft resolution on "Women, disarmament, non—proliferation and arms control". She requested support from Member States for the establishment of the Arms Trade Treaty secretariat in Trinidad and Tobago.

ANN KYUNG UN DEER, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that sexual violence in armed conflict, including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy and forced sterilization, often took place within a wider range of violations, such as killing, child recruitment and destruction of property. Used as a form of reprisal, to create fear or as a form of torture, it was aimed at destroying the social fabric. Certain women and girls, including the internally displaced, migrants, widows, heads of households, detainees, those associated with armed forces or armed groups, and those of a specific ethnicity, faced a heightened risk of sexual violence, she said.

Sexual violence was also perpetrated against men and boys, she continued, pointing out that in many contexts, detention could render them particularly vulnerable. The results of sexual violence could be severe physical and psychological trauma, ranging from HIV infection, stigmatization, rejection, unwanted pregnancy, and exclusion from the community and from access to necessary health services. "Educating communities is vital to reducing the risk of stigmatization, rejection and exclusion of victims, and to fostering an environment in which victims feel able to seek help," she emphasized before urging Member States to prevent, halt and prosecute all forms of sexual violence.

ALESSANDRO MOTTER, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), said the organization's strategy on women's political participation had four entry points: informing effective policymaking through research; empowering women parliamentarians; reforming parliaments to make them more gender-sensitive; and advancing women's rights by eliminating discrimination and violence against women. "Research is at the core of policymaking," he emphasized. "It is essential for taking stock of the situation and for shaping policy responses." Since the First World Conference on Women in 1975, IPU had been the principal source of data and information on women in parliament, he recalled before echoing the Secretary—General's call for sex—disaggregated data to be made available on local political participation and on appointed decision-making public administration positions.

ANNE BANG CHRISTENSEN, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, welcomed the increased recognition of the importance of addressing the specific needs of women, girls, boys and men in emergencies, while also giving appropriate consideration to age and disabilities. She noted the risk of community tension and inter-personal violence in conflicts, especially in situations of natural disaster, whereby gender-based violence occurred in camps, shelters, homes and streets. It had devastating physical and mental effects on victims as well as socioeconomic repercussions for the individuals, families and communities affected, she noted, calling on all stakeholders engaged in emergency

preparedness, response and recovery to prioritize the prevention and mitigation of violence as well as responses, and to strengthen community-based support. Changing mindsets, attitudes and behaviours from discrimination and violence against women to respect for diversity, equality and active social and political inclusion was critical to the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment into discussions on development, she said.

ZACHARY BLEICHER, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), delivered a joint statement on behalf of the two other Rome-based agencies, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). Emphasizing that the importance of empowering women could not be overstated, he said it was particularly crucial in rural areas. In fact, women represented 43 per cent of the agricultural workforce worldwide and as much as 70 per cent in some countries. Rural women were also caregivers and small—business entrepreneurs, he added. In that context, the Rome-based agencies remained committed to implementation of the programme “Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women”, a five—year initiative implemented jointly with UN-Women. It was active in different regions where the three agencies, alongside the countries involved, had identified priority areas, including the training of women owners of small businesses in order to increase their productivity; supporting maternal, infant and child nutrition by providing supplementary food and promoting nutrition-sensitive gardening; and enhancing gender-responsive delivery of agricultural services, among other activities.

TELMA VIALE, International Labour Organization (ILO), welcomed the Secretary General's call for States to ensure that national laws to protect women migrant workers, including domestic workers, included robust monitoring, complaints and dispute-resolution mechanisms, in line with the relevant ILO conventions. She then conveyed five messages on protecting and promoting decent conditions for migrant women at work, emphasizing the need for: a migrant-centred and rights—based approach to labour migration; particular attention to domestic workers; decisive action to regulate recruitment agencies; alertness to signs of human trafficking and forced labour; and collective actions to stop gender-based violence in the workplace. “No other form of sex discrimination violates so many fundamental human rights as violence against women,” she stressed. Workplace violence and sexual harassment presented a significant barrier to women accessing and progressing through the labour market, and ILO would therefore continue its efforts to ensure a world free from violence against women and to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Right of Reply

The representative of Israel, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, rebutted a statement by an observer for the State of Palestine, citing a Human Rights Watch report that documented violations by Palestinian authorities. Palestinians should address the issues revealed in that report if they were genuinely interested in improving the situation of women. No country was perfect, she pointed out.

An observer for the State of Palestine said that, no matter how many reports Israel's representative cited, they had been taken out of context. The main obstacle to the advancement of Palestinian women was Israel's occupation.

The Committee then began its consideration of the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

Introduction of Reports and Interactive Dialogue

ANTHONY LAKE, Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), presented the Secretary-General's reports on “Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child” (document A/68/257); “The girl child” (document A/68/263); “Collaboration within the United Nations system on child protection” (document A/68/253); and “Follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children” (document A/68/269).

He said that a society's true worth, the depth of its soul and its sense of its own self-interest, was best measured by how it treated its youngest members; the girls and boys who would one day become tomorrow's parents, citizens and leaders. Their lives and struggles, their view of the world, their capacity to shape the world for their own children must be of primary concern to all. The data captured in each report demonstrated how far the world had come together since the first United Nations special session on children 21 years ago, and how collaboration was yielding results for children, he said.

By 2012, 117 countries had prohibited corporal punishment in schools, and 10,000 communities in 15 African nations had declared their commitment to end the outrageous practice of female genital mutilation, he said. The global campaign for the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child had resulted in 166 States joining the Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and 20 more had ratified the Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, bringing the total to 152.

“But perhaps the most rewarding measurement of our success is lives saved,” he continued, noting that the annual rate of child deaths had fallen dramatically over the last two decades, from 12 million in 1990 to 6.9 million in 2011. That translated into an estimated 90 million young lives saved over that period. Yet “we cannot be satisfied that 18,000 children still die every day, mostly from causes we can prevent,” he stressed, pointing out that 150 million children between the ages of five and 14 were engaged in child labour, while two million children in Syria had dropped out of school and one million had become refugees. At the current pace, Millennium Development Goal 4 — cutting the rate of under-five mortality by two thirds — would not be achieved until 2028, he cautioned.

While there was a lack of specific overall numbers, AIDS had created an estimated 17.8 million AIDS orphans, he said, describing also how girls were married off at an early age and how children bore the burden of running households. Investing in a girl’s education would do more than just equipping her with knowledge and skills. Quality education set in motion a path towards prosperity, empowerment and inclusion, not only for the individual but also for societies and economies. Investing in every child was also the most practical path to the greatest possible progress towards development goals.

Citing a UNICEF study – Narrowing the Gaps — he said better results could be achieved more cost-effectively and more rapidly when policies and programmes were designed not around the easiest—to—reach, but the hardest—to—reach, the most disadvantaged and marginalized. The additional costs of reaching the latter were more than outweighed by the additional results. The recommendations contained in the four reports just presented could help all stakeholders build support, especially among Governments, for investing in the future of every child, he said. “It’s a cliché to say that ‘children are our future’, but it’s true.”

The representative of Cuba highlighted her Government’s successful collaboration with UNICEF.

Mr. LAKE responded by thanking her.

LEILA ZERROUGUI, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, presented her report (document A/68/267) and noted that the scourge of violent conflict continued to blight the lives of children. In Syria, more than four million of them had been affected by conflict, and one million of those lived outside their country. But Syrian children were not alone, she said, pointing out that armed conflict denied tens of millions of others their only chance for an education. The consequences were devastating and the impact would be seen for generations to come.

The daunting challenges facing such children could only be addressed through innovative, broad—based partnerships and collaboration among Member States, United Nations entities, regional organizations, civil society and communities, she said. In addition to its ongoing work with the European Union, the Office of the Special Representative had signed a partnership agreement with the African Union this year, and would continue to reach out to other regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Office had initiated a global campaign to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces by 2016, she noted, adding that the initiative aimed to deepen cooperation with Governments that had committed to ending under-age recruitment. Six action plans were currently under implementation, including those with Yemen and Chad.

It was vital to integrate child-protection concerns into mediation processes and peace agreements, she continued. Such an action would provide opportunities for their release and allow the international community to mobilize resources for their reintegration and return to normality in the longer term. It would also create the framework within which to establish national policies and mechanisms for preventing children from being re-recruited or marginalized in societies making the transition from conflict to peace. In that regard, she urged Member States and regional organizations to include measures to address children’s needs in broader peacebuilding, recovery and development efforts. “The international community must shift from recognizing the deadly interaction between armed conflict and education, to proactively building an even more robust framework to strengthen education in emergencies.”

Several delegates asked questions or made comments, with some seeking additional information on the campaign to end Government recruitment and use of children, and others inquiring about her Office's interaction with non-State actors in such situations. Other questions related to the integration of child protection into mediation processes and the need to mainstream the issue of children in armed conflict.

Ms. ZERROUGUI said in response that of the eight Member States listed as recruiting and using children, six had signed an action plan, while Sudan had announced that it would sign one. Non-State actors were not homogeneous, she said, pointing out that some were willing to work with her Office while others were not. For instance, the Office was interacting with non-State actors in the Philippines and Sudan, she said, adding that if the necessary mechanisms and tools were in place, it would be easier to address violations by non-State actors.

Including the issue of children from the beginning of mediation processes would facilitate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children, she continued. To that end, the Office of the Special Representative was working with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs. On a question about mainstreaming, she said a holistic approach including child protection was vital when working with Governments, and the Office was seeking to increase its presence on the ground by including child-protection advisers in field missions.

Speakers representing the European Union, Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Syria, Slovenia, Norway, Germany, Sudan, Iran, Egypt and Belarus also participated in the dialogue.

MARTA SANTOS PAIS, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, presenting her annual report (document A/68/274), said meaningful inter-agency cooperation gave the issue of freedom from violence in the juvenile justice system visible relevance in the United Nations policy agenda, and brought forth the question of restorative justice for children. Based on dialogue, mediation and problem solving, restorative justice promoted a paradigm shift in the way young offenders, often stigmatized, were perceived by society, encouraging repentance, forgiveness, accountability, reconciliation and genuine reintegration.

She said that strengthening strategic partnerships with regional organizations and institutions helped to maximize engagement with Governments, promote the cross-fertilization of experiences and consolidate national action for the prevention and elimination of violence against children. "This process has been rich and influential and has led to tangible results, inter alia, an important monitoring process to assess progress and address persisting and emerging challenge," she said.

Turning to the global survey on violence against children, she said it was informed by reports from more than 100 States. It was therefore a significant source of information on national measures and initiatives designed to advance implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children. She noted with satisfaction the growing number of ratifications of child-protection instruments, and the incremental development of legislative and policy reforms, supported by the launch of public information campaigns to mobilize support and overcome attitudes and social norms condoning violence.

Despite progress, she warned, the risk of violence against children remained present in every setting, as shown in "irrefutable figures", such as the 168 million boys and girls involved in exploitative work or the 11 million girls involved in domestic work. Child trafficking was a serious form of violence, with children enslaved in prostitution, sold into marriage, coerced to work in plantations or deep-sea fishing, forced to beg on the street or recruited by criminal networks. Such violence was associated with poor law, weak law enforcement, high levels of organized crime and homicide, and a culture of impunity.

Besides the impact on child victims and their families, she said, violence was also associated with high costs for society, diverting billions of dollars from social spending, slowing economic development and eroding the human and social capital of nations. "Preventing and ending violence against children requires a global effort on an unprecedented scale, an effort that includes political leaders as well as ordinary citizens, and children as well as adults," she declared. "The cost of inaction, for every child, and for nations' social progress, is simply too great to be tolerated."

Participating delegates asked about several issues, including the envisaged outreach activities to disseminate information about the Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; about the participation of children in developing national programmes; and about initiatives undertaken to foster changes in attitude in support of legislative norms on children. Other questions related to the

reporting of violence by children in conflict, child trafficking, children's issues in the post-2015 development framework and the use of new information and communication technology in relation to child pornography.

Ms. SANTOS PAIS responded to the question about the dissemination of information on the Protocol by recalling a meeting of the Council of the European Union, where European countries had been informed about the implementation of the Protocol. They had shared best practices and discussed the role of the Ombudsperson, with the overall goal of ensuring full comprehension of the Protocol. On the involvement of children in formulating national programmes, she said that a forum organized in Ghana, where more than 100 children had represented 14 West African countries, had discussed measures to prevent harmful practices as well as ideas for raising awareness of violence against children.

On reporting violence, she said the global survey recommended the creation of an enabling, sensitive and accessible environment in which children, especially those with disabilities, could report abuses, otherwise impunity could prevail. On child trafficking, she underlined the importance of community awareness raising, adding that education was the best tool for prevention. As for inclusion in the post-2015 development framework, she said the report of the relevant high-level panel recognized the need to make it a priority, and called on Member States to push it forward.

Turning to the question of information and communications technology and children, she stressed that the global survey's key finding demonstrated the need to address that issue, as well as the lack of specific norms for dealing with the misuse of such technology, and its connection to violence against children. In that regard, she underlined the important collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). "Censorship is not the way, but we should rather empower our children in the use of these new technologies," she said.

Participants included speakers representing El Salvador, European Union delegation, Portugal, Norway, Japan, United States, Slovenia, Israel and Austria.

NAJAT MAALLA M'JID, Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, presented the relevant report (document A/68/275), noting that it was articulated in two parts, the first on activities undertaken under her mandate between August 2012 and August 2013, and the second, thematic part presenting prevention as the key component in combating the sale and sexual exploitation of children. Focusing on the thematic part, she said many efforts had been undertaken to prevent the abuse and exploitation of children. Awareness campaigns had been launched, stakeholders trained, codes of conduct adopted, access to free education guaranteed, legal reforms undertaken and criminal networks dismantled.

However, that was not enough, as children continued to be victims of sale and sexual exploitation, she said. Preventive measures so far had not guaranteed long-term protection, because there was no coordination among the different actors involved. Preventive actions, in fact, often involved sporadic and scattered activities that failed to address the various underlying factors in a systematic, holistic and sustainable manner. The cause and risk factors of such crimes were multidimensional, complex and in evolution, and for that reason, good knowledge and understanding of all context-related factors - socioeconomic, political and legislative, among others - was necessary. Long-term prevention must be systemic, and for that reason, changes could not take place overnight but must develop over the years and be accompanied by strong political will.

She said that in order to effectively protect children in the long term it was indispensable to: establish a reliable and standardized information system; ratify all regional and international instruments and establish solid legislative frameworks; strengthen families and their ability to prevent all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation; undertake regular sensitization and information campaigns; consolidate regional and international cooperation; and establish evaluation and control mechanisms in order systematically to measure the impact of prevention measures.

The road ahead was still long, she continued, emphasizing that no effort should be spared in ensuring a more dignified life for all children. Outlining missions she had undertaken, she said excellent practices were often in place, but described how she had also become indignant due to the occasional social tolerance of the sexual exploitation of children, often justified by poverty and lack of political will. Child protection was still not a priority in many countries, she stressed.

Delegates asked questions about how justice mechanisms could be made available to children, and what could be done when they were afraid of applying them; how to involve Internet service providers

and tourism companies in preventing the crimes of selling children, child prostitution and child pornography; and how the Special Rapporteur evaluated levels of international cooperation and assessed progress.

Ms. MAALLA M'JID responded by saying that in order to encourage children to apply legal mechanisms, it was necessary to develop and consolidate the population's trust in the justice system, and to guarantee protection for both children and witnesses. It was also necessary to make families and children aware of their rights. Another crucial factor was the training of judges, because children involved in child pornography, for example, had often been criminalized.

Responding to the question about the involvement of Internet providers and other businesses, she said the private sector's role in preventing child pornography and similar crimes was crucial. However, private companies should not only have a moral obligation but also a legal responsibility to prevent such offences.

On transnational cooperation, she said that question was complex, as the exploiter was often in one country and the child in another, adding that legal procedures differed from one country to the other. It was essential to update the lists of offenders and pornographic websites involving children, and to take into account the difficulty of developing expertise in cybercrime.

Speakers representing the European Union, United States and Slovenia also took part in the dialogue.

KRISTEN SANDBERG, Chairperson, Committee on the Rights of the Child, said: "For its part, the Committee has continued to improve its working methods, seeking greater efficiency," she said. Providing an update on its work, she said it had reviewed and adopted its concluding observations on the reports of 34 States parties, and finalized its work on four general comments. The latter aimed to provide States with an authoritative interpretation of the rights contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, provide guidance on particular issues, and help States understand how to fulfil their treaty obligations.

She said the Committee looked forward to the imminent entry into force of the Convention's third Optional Protocol, on a communications procedure, noting that two further ratifications would empower children to have access to international human rights bodies. "Receiving and examining individual complaints from children will be a new way of looking into the implementation of children's rights in practice, and will shed new light on the interpretation of their rights," she said. Noting the Convention's imminent twenty-fifth anniversary, she encouraged States that had not yet done so to ratify the treaty and its Optional Protocols.

General Discussion

RODOLFO REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba), speaking for CELAC, stated his concern about the UNICEF annual data on the incidence of deaths for preventable diseases, and on hunger, poverty, inequality and social exclusion suffered by children all over the world. The signature and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols would significantly help to ensure that all children fully enjoyed their human rights and fundamental freedoms. CELAC members would also continue to participate in negotiations for a draft resolution on the rights of the child presented this year by the European Union.

High priority, he went on to say, should be given to children with disabilities, as those were the most marginalized, and often suffered from generalized violations of their rights. One out of five children in developing countries, in fact, had some disability. As well, priority should be given to indigenous children. Further, he called on all States to take all the necessary measures to prevent the enforced disappearances of children and to cooperate in locating them and returning them to their families. He was particularly concerned by the vulnerability of children involved in human trafficking, migration, smuggling, sexual exploitation, sale of organs, child pornography and cybercrimes. Those predicaments were often related to situations of poverty, migration and organized crime, among other factors, he added.

RAJA REZA BIN RAJA ZAIB SHAH (Malaysia), speaking for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that in order to ensure further progress in improving the situation of children, a systematic, comprehensive and multifaceted approach was required, alongside cooperation and collaboration by regional and international stakeholders. It was important that each child-protection mechanism adhere to its mandate, and respect bilateral frameworks between each Member State and its respective United Nations country team. He then emphasized the bloc's responsibility for ensuring the

promotion and protection of the rights of children in the region, and its commitment to building a community “that offers abundant opportunities for learning and social growth towards nurturing competent citizens who would contribute to the region’s continued peace, stability and prosperity.”

JOSEPH GODDARD (Barbados), speaking for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), associated himself with CELAC and said that the progress made globally in ending all forms of violence against children remained uneven. Actions taken by States were characterized by uncoordinated policy interventions and dispersed and ill-forced legislation. They were based on scarce data and research, he added. At the regional level, the need to address sexual violence against children had been recognized during the Conference on Combating Sexual Violence against Children in the Caribbean, organized in Barbados at the end of 2012, he recalled, noting that participating representatives of Governments, civil society, academia, religious institutions, law enforcement and the legal community had renewed their commitment to accelerate and intensify efforts to combat and eliminate child sexual abuse.

Turning to youth crime, he emphasized that children and youth had become increasingly involved in crime and affiliated with gangs. Risk factors for youth crime included poverty, poor parenting, receding influence of institutions such as schools, exposure to violence at home and poor educational opportunities. Effective responses to such situations must aim at prevention and investment in early childhood education. Wishing the highest attainable health standards for its citizen, CARICOM had tackled the issue of non-communicable diseases, he said. Due to shifting cultural consumption and recreation patterns, childhood obesity was on the increase, and must be addressed by underlining the importance of sport and physical activity.

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