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# General Assembly

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Sixty-eighth General Assembly  
Third Committee  
35<sup>th</sup> & 36<sup>th</sup> Meetings (AM & PM)

### **THIRD COMMITTEE APPROVES TEXTS AIMED AT ERADICATING ILLITERACY WORLDWIDE,**

### **BOOSTING COOPERATIVES AS SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS ENTERPRISES**

#### **Continuing General Discussion,** **Delegates Criticize Use of Human Rights as Excuse for Interference, Sanctions**

Approving two draft resolutions on social development today, the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) also continued its general discussion on the promotion and protection of human rights in relation to State sovereignty.

Acting without a vote, the Committee approved a draft titled "Literacy for life: shaping future agendas" (document A/C.3/68/L.12/Rev.1), by which the General Assembly would recognize the importance of continuing the implementation of measures to eliminate illiteracy worldwide. It would also encourage Member States to further utilize innovative information and communications technology solutions to address the needs of marginalized groups, including girls and persons with disabilities, among others.

Also without a vote, the Committee approved a draft entitled "Cooperatives in social development" (document A/C.3/68/L.13.Rev.1), by which it recommended that the General Assembly encourage Member States to support cooperatives as sustainable and successful business enterprises contributing directly to employment generation, to the eradication of poverty and hunger, and to social protection.

During the day-long debate on human rights, some 30 speakers outlined their efforts at the national, regional and international levels to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

China's representative, arguing that there was no "one-size-fits-all" approach to promoting and protecting human rights, said that Western countries should respect the endeavours of other nations to ensure their promotion and protection on the basis of national conditions. To properly handle differences over human rights issues, the international community should observe the principles of the United Nations Charter, including respect for State sovereignty, he added.

Similarly, the delegate from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea declared: "Human rights cannot be assured in the absence of respect for sovereignty." Yet, Western countries had invaded sovereign States and slaughtered civilians in outrageous violation of that principle, he argued. They had also interfered in the internal affairs of other nations, instigating armed conflicts to overthrow legitimate Governments. The double standards applied in the human rights arena must be eliminated, he emphasized, adding that the selective levelling of groundless accusations went unchallenged, with the United States and other Western nations acting as human rights judges and imposing their values upon developing countries.

Cuba's representative was of the same opinion, recalling the Charter principles and reiterating the importance of dialogue and transparency, without double standards. Despite the

genocidal blockade imposed by the United States, the country believed in the validity of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism and was willing to offer its own contributions to such processes.

The delegate from Belarus described several so-called “mature democracies” as being associated with human rights violations such as racial discrimination, manifestation of neo-fascism and ill-treatment of migrants. Two examples were the emergence of a neo-Nazi force in Germany and violations of journalists’ rights in the United Kingdom. She said that sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States were unacceptable because they undermined economic and social rights in the affected countries, she emphasized.

Zimbabwe’s representative strongly rejected the exploitation of human rights as a cover for interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, and called for the lifting of unilateral sanctions against her country. “No country has the moral authority to condemn the human rights challenges facing others,” she said, voicing concern that United Nations human rights mechanisms were falling prey to the influence of international human rights movements supported and well-funded by pressure groups whose interests were at complete variance with those of the great majority of people, particularly those in the developing world.

Iran’s representative echoed those that sentiment, saying that unilateral sanctions should not be used as tools for political coercion. Under no circumstances should people be deprived of their means of subsistence and development. Efforts towards the realization of human rights should therefore extend to the fight against deprivation of economic, social and cultural rights, he emphasized.

Sounding a similar note, Myanmar’s representative listed the reforms carried out by his Government to ensure that national legislation was in line with the constitution and with international instruments. Among other actions, it had established a special committee comprising former prisoners of conscience, which identified prisoners eligible for amnesty. The goal was to free all prisoners of conscience by the end of the year.

Also speaking today were representatives of Tunisia, Kuwait, Qatar, Norway, Chile, Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, Greece, Serbia, Colombia, Turkey, Uganda, Indonesia, Botswana, Tonga, Algeria, Cameroon, Albania, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, Nepal, Eritrea, Libya and Togo.

Speaking in exercise of the right of reply were representatives of Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Cyprus, Japan and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Introducing draft resolutions on social development, the rights of children, crime prevention and criminal justice, and human rights were representatives of Mongolia, Germany, Spain, Finland, Denmark, Thailand, Lithuania and Colombia.

The Third Committee will reconvene at 10 a.m. on Friday, 1 November, to conclude its discussion on the promotion and protection of human rights.

### Background

Meeting this morning to continue its consideration of the promotion and protection of human rights, the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) was expected to take action on one draft resolution, and to continue its general discussion. For background information, see Press Release [GA/SHC/4076](#) of 23 October.

### General Discussion

LISANDRA ASTIASARÁN ARIAS ([Cuba](#)), associating herself with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), reiterated the importance of dialogue and transparency, without any application of double standards, in promoting and protecting human rights in accordance with to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Cuba had always opposed politically motivated “selectivity” towards developing countries, she added. It believed in the validity of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, as demonstrated by the recent submission of its national report, and was willing to offer its own contributions to such processes, despite the genocidal

blockade imposed by the United States. "It is scandalous to hear a long list of accusations" by certain Western countries, despite the accusations moved against them in terms of human rights violations, including abductions, torture and the use of drones, she said, adding that such countries seemed to forget their historic responsibility.

AMIRA DALI ( Tunisia) said her country was opening a new chapter in its history and seeking to build a pluralistic society by advancing a new democratic system through political reform. Creating a civilian democratic State was a top concern of the people that had been manifested in the course of a revolution. The Government had acceded to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. International support was needed to draft legislation addressing high unemployment, particularly among youth. "There is no room for exclusion and marginalization," she said, adding that no one should be left out of economic growth and progress.

Mr. ALDEHANI ( Kuwait) said his country had introduced human rights issues into school textbooks in order to make students aware of their relevance. Kuwait's commitment was demonstrated by its ratification of multilateral instruments, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as its Optional Protocols, among others. He condemned the illegal Israeli settlements that "consistently violate the human rights of the Palestinian people", as well as the brutal blockade against the Gaza Strip, carried out in disregard of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Kuwait also condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Urging the United Nations to address the humanitarian crisis in that country, he said his Government would gladly accept the Secretary-General's invitation to host a second donor conference for Syria in early 2014.

Ms. AL-TEMIMI ( Qatar) said her country had made great progress in the protection and promotion of human rights. It had acceded to a number of international and regional human rights instruments, and celebrated Human Rights Day every 11 November. That spirit had become "DNA in national culture", she said, adding that the creation of several State institutions demonstrated the Government's interest in the promotion and protection of human rights. That initiative included the creation of human rights offices in some Government ministries, and the establishment of the Qatar Institute, which dealt with issues relating to women and children. Qatar hosted the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region, she said, urging support for its activities and noting that her delegation was preparing a draft resolution to that end. She called upon Israel to end human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories, underlining also the need to address the prolonged humanitarian crisis in Syria, which had impacted neighbouring countries.

GEIR O.PEDERSEN ( Norway) voiced concern over the millions of refugees and those internally displaced by the conflict in Syria, calling on the national authorities to provide safe and unhindered access to humanitarian relief operations. On freedom of expression and privacy, he said journalists, human rights defenders and political activists especially risked being subjected to arbitrary surveillance because of their monitoring activities and their use of the Internet as a communications tool. He noted with concern the systematic and structural discrimination and violence faced by women human rights defenders and those working on corporate-related human rights violations, as well as violations of the right to religion or belief. Discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity were also a cause of concern. The best way to answer hate speech and negative stereotyping was not through legislation and censorship, but rather through freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, he emphasized. In the twentieth anniversary year of the Vienna Declaration's adoption, the international community should not only take stock, but also discuss how to strengthen the engagement of the United Nations in protecting and promoting human rights, which were increasingly relevant for peace, security and development, he said.

RENÉ ALFONSO RUIDIAZ ( Chile), associating himself with CELAC on the question of migrants' human rights, and with the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) on the promotion and protection of human rights, said his country placed a high priority on human rights at the international level. It had received visits from the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in 2012, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human

rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism in July. At the country level, the National Institute of Human Rights had been very engaged in the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, and had sent national delegations to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2012 and to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination this year. Chile encouraged the inclusion of human rights as guiding principles in the post-2015 development agenda, he said, stressing also the need to intensify efforts to protect human rights advocates against threats and intimidation, and to promote interreligious understanding.

WANG MIN (China), arguing that there was no “one-size-fits-all” approach to promoting and protecting human rights, said Western countries should respect the endeavours of other nations to ensure their promotion and protection on the basis of their own national conditions. To properly handle differences on human rights issues, the international community should observe the principles of the United Nations Charter, including respect for State sovereignty, but also the equal treatment of all human rights. “Thanks to decade of efforts, China has found a socialist human rights development path with Chinese characteristics that serves China’s own realities,” he said, stressing his country’s opposition to unwarranted finger-pointing and attacks on its human rights record by some Western countries.

NICHOLAS EMILIOU (Cyprus), associating himself with the European Union, said 39 years after the Turkish invasion, the occupation of more than a third of his country continued amid massive violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Cyprus had the highest proportion of internally displaced persons as a percentage of its population, he noted. However, there was hope, he said, saluting the work of the bicomunal Committee on Missing Persons. Since the task of determining the fate of the missing went beyond the scope of the Third Committee, the Government of Turkey must fully address the issue with urgency, he emphasized. Another humanitarian issue of grave concern was the living conditions of enclave persons in the occupied part of Cyprus. Despite some improvements in recent years, Greek and Maronite Cypriots living in the occupied areas were still subjected to harassment, restrictions, denial of access to adequate medical care and curtailment of the right to freedom of worship. Additionally, the widespread destruction and looting of religious and cultural heritage in those areas was not only a crime against Cyprus, but one against humanity, he said. Recent small positive developments were proof of the powerful yearning of the Cypriot people for peaceful coexistence. Cyprus was ready to embark on a renewed effort to reach a lasting and viable solution to the problem.

TARIQ BIN MOHAMMED RASHWAN (Saudi Arabia), underscoring his country’s efforts to protect and promote human rights, said it had always implemented the principles of Islam, which had observed respect for human rights for more than 14 centuries, as well as the five international instruments on human rights to which it had acceded. He emphasized the importance of cultural diversity and peoples’ cultural rights of peoples, including the Arab and Islamic identity. Condemning Israel’s violence against Palestinians in refugee camps, he called on the international community also to take measures for a comprehensive ceasefire in Syria and for peaceful and lasting solutions to the Muslim minority’s situation in Myanmar.

WIN NAING ( Myanmar) said his Government was carrying out reforms to ensure that national legislation was in line with the Constitution and with international instruments. Parliament had passed 58 laws since its inception in 2011, including new ones permitting freedom of association and expression. A special committee comprising former prisoners of conscience was identifying prisoners eligible for amnesty with a view to freeing all prisoners of conscience by the end of the year. Furthermore, Myanmar was working to resolve inter-communal violence through plans to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry as well as the holding of interfaith dialogues. More broadly, the Government received the Special Rapporteur twice a year and had participated in the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in 2011. Indeed, Myanmar’s democratic transformation deserved fair and just recognition, he said, calling for an end to country-specific mandates.

IAKOVOS IAKOVIDIS ( Greece) said that for almost four decades, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Cyprus continued to be violated as a result of the Turkish military invasion of 1974 and the continued occupation of 37 per cent of the Republic’s territory. The issue of missing persons was highly sensitive to Greece, with 64 Greek nationals missing, he said, calling upon Turkey to conduct investigations. Almost 200,000 Greek Cypriots continued to live as displaced persons, refugees within their own country prevented by Turkey from returning to their

ancestral homes and exercising legal property rights. The massive illegal sale of Greek Cypriot properties had exacerbated the problem, he said, adding that the island nation's demographic composition was being altered through the illegal influx of Turkish settlers in the occupied area.

MILAN MILANOVIC (Serbia) said his country had taken a number of measures in the past year aimed at promoting and protecting the Roma population, and had been investing in efforts to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation. The situation of human rights in Kosovo and Metohija remained difficult, he said, adding that the protection of minority rights in particular was unsatisfactory. No security or other necessary preconditions had been created for a sustainable return of internally displaced persons, he noted, emphasizing that it was of utmost importance that they be allowed to take part in local elections. The climate of fear created by intimidation continued at all levels in Kosovo and Metohija. Records of ethnically-motivated incidents were patchy because criminal offences against Serbs were usually recorded as general crime, while those recorded otherwise were prosecuted perfunctorily or not at all. Enjoyment of the rights to education, health protection and employment remained a challenge for non-Albanian communities and there were no legal mechanisms to protect Serb and other non-Albanian workers who lost their jobs. Particularly problematic was the enjoyment of property rights, he said, adding that the privatization process was very much in dispute. While dialogue was central to peace and amity, Serbia would not recognize Kosovo's unilaterally declared independence, he stressed.

RI TONG IL (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said human rights could not be assured in the absence of respect for sovereignty. Yet, Western countries had invaded sovereign States and slaughtered civilians in outrageous violation of that principle. They were also interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and instigating armed conflicts to overthrow legitimate Governments. The double standards applied in the human rights arena must be eliminated, he emphasized, adding that the selective levelling of groundless accusations was going unchallenged, with the United States and other Western nations acting as human rights judges and imposing their values upon developing countries. Urging Japan to settle its past crimes against humanity, he said that, for its part, his country was ensuring that human-centred *Juche* was improving its people's human rights.

MARÍA PAULINA DÁVILA Dávila ( Colombia), associating herself with MERCOSUR, said her country's commitment in the field of human rights had recently been translated into the National Development Plan 2010-2014. She also emphasized Government's efforts in respect of reparation policies for victims of the internal armed conflict, including land restitution. Thousand of them had received compensation and financial support for their projects and livelihoods. On another front, she said Colombia had put measures in place to protect human rights activists, and that 7,718 people were currently benefiting, including union representatives, managers and advocates of human rights associations, social, civil and rural victims, as members of ethnic minorities. She said the armed forces had not recruited children under 18 in the last 16 years, but illegal armed groups still enlisted them, often forcibly.

BERNADETTE SILUNGISILE NTABA (Zimbabwe), associating herself with the Group of 77 and China, called for the lifting of unilateral sanctions against her country and reiterated Zimbabwe's rejection of the exploitation of human rights as cover for interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States. No country had the moral authority to condemn the human rights challenges facing others, and doing so constituted meddling. She condemned the use of human rights as a form of propaganda or political tool to vilify other countries while pursuing selfish interests detrimental to the national interests of the targeted States. Rejecting attempts to reinterpret existing instruments to promote new rights that had no international legal standing, she said Zimbabwe was also concerned that United Nations human rights mechanisms were falling prey to the influence of some international human rights movements supported and well-funded by pressure groups whose interests were at complete variance with those of the great majority of people, particularly those in the developing world.

LEVENT ELER ( Turkey) noted that various reports by United Nations-affiliated and non-affiliated entities portrayed the deplorable human rights violations in Syria. The continued use of indiscriminate firepower by the Syrian authorities, widespread attacks against civilians, obstruction and arbitrary denial of humanitarian assistance, arbitrary detentions and deaths in custody, were all very sad realities inside Syria. "Unfortunately, what took only two lines in this statement costs a

whole life of trauma, if not an end to life, for many innocent civilians going through this grim experience,” he said. The United Nations had condemned the very large-scale violations in its numerous documents, and the latest was just being tabled today in the Third Committee, which was important in keeping eyes on the unacceptable humanitarian situation created by the regime its affiliated militia.

TOM TARCISIUS ONYAI MANANO ( Uganda) said his Government had ratified several core international and regional human rights instruments and was seeking to bring the national system into line with the principles set forth therein. In 2005, the Government had adopted legislation to establish a system of multiparty democracy. In 1997, the Ugandan Human Rights Commission had been created, enabling people to bring violations either before it or to the regular courts. Uganda had also created an independent and impartial judicial system to promote the rule of law. Turning to the freedom of opinion and expression, he said Uganda had adopted the Information Act in 2005, and as a result, the country had now 122 private FM radio stations, 10 print media and 22 television broadcasting stations.

ASADOLLAH ESHRAGH JAHROMI ( Iran) said cultural diversity was an asset for the advancement and welfare of humanity and should be valued as enriching society. The biannual Non-Aligned Movement resolution entitled “Human rights and cultural diversity” would foster a favourable environment for a constructive dialogue on the benefits of different cultural heritages in promoting the universality of human rights. Efforts towards the realization of human rights should, therefore, extend to the fight against deprivation of economic, social and cultural rights, he said. On the right to development, there was a need for stronger political will and for a new legal instrument binding developed countries to provide sustained financial support and transfer technology. In conclusion, he said that unilateral sanctions should not be used as tools for political coercion, adding that under no circumstances should people be deprived of their means of subsistence and development.

The Committee then heard the introduction of several draft resolutions.

#### Introduction of Drafts

The representative of Mongolia introduced a draft resolution on “Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas” (document A/C.3/68/L.25).

The representatives of Thailand and Lithuania presented a draft on “Strengthening collaboration on child protection within the United Nations system” (document A/C.3/68/L.26) and on “Rights of the child” (document A/C.3/68/L.28), respectively.

The representatives of Finland and Denmark submitted, respectively, draft resolutions on “International Covenants on Human Rights” (document A/C.3/68/L.32), and “Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (document A/C.3/68/L.33).

The representatives of Germany and Spain then tabled introduced a draft on “The human right to water and sanitation” (document A/C.3/68/L.34).

Finally, the representative of Colombia introduced a draft on “Preventing and combating corrupt practices and the transfer of proceeds of corruption, facilitating asset recovery and returning such assets to legitimate owners, in particular to countries of origin, in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption” (document A/C.3/68/L.21).

#### Action on Draft

The Committee then adopted, without a vote, a draft titled “Literacy for life: shaping future agendas” (document A/C.3/68/L.12/Rev.1) and another on “Cooperatives in social development” (document A/C.3/68/L.13/Rev.1).

#### Statements

DIANA EMILLA SARI SUTIKNO ( Indonesia), aligning herself with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said promotion and protection of human rights should be carried

out through constructive dialogue and international cooperation aimed at strengthening the capacity of States to comply with their obligations. There was a linkage between human rights and their deliberations within the post-2015 development agenda. Indonesia, for its part, attached importance to the implementation of its commitments as reflected in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and had continued to make efforts to translate them into action. Despite many achievements and much progress since the adoption of the Declaration 20 years ago, there remained challenges that needed to be tackled through a collective strengthening of political will. As the world's third largest democracy, Indonesia strongly believed that any democratic transition should go hand in hand with the promotion and protection of human rights. The international community should contribute towards enabling Governments to assume their core functions and align assistance behind their respective needs. That endeavour should be based on the principles of constructive dialogue and genuine cooperation from the country concerned, as there was no fixed formula for addressing specific human rights situations. Indonesia had been striving to protect migrant workers by strengthening national laws and institutional framework, as well as by advancing legally binding instruments within ASEAN.

CHARLES NTWAAGAE ( Botswana) said his country continued its efforts, both at the national and international levels, to implement the principles of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and those of the Durban Review Conference outcome document. At the national level, Botswana had established the Inter-ministerial Committee on Treaties and Conventions to ensure compliance with its obligations under the instruments to which it was a party, and took the necessary steps to ratify human rights covenants to which it was not yet a party. Furthermore, the Government had extended an invitation to the Special Rapporteur on cultural rights and the Independent Expert on minority issues to visit in 2014, he said, adding that Botswana attached great importance to the overall work of the United Nations treaty body system, including the Universal Periodic Review mechanism.

MAHE TUPOUNIUA ( Tonga) said that among his country's achievements in the field of human rights were: the recent transition to a democratic form of Government and the related free and fair parliamentary elections; freedom of religion; an independent judiciary; the adoption of recent laws to protect against police abuses; the cooperation of national and local civil society groups to help persons with disabilities; and, near-universal literacy. However, he noted that corruption within the Government, and violence against women continued to be a serious challenge. To make progress in those areas, resources and cooperation from other countries and international and non-governmental organizations were essential. Tonga, therefore, welcomed the continued and increased assistance through durable partnerships, while thanking those States and entities that were already providing support to his country.

SELMA MANSOURI ( Algeria) said her country was investing in its youth by increasing the number of initiatives aimed at easing their access to the labour market. In addition, Algeria had made significant progress in increasing women's participation in political life. The Government considered it a priority to build on the achievements of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights and to implement its Declaration and Plan of Action. Recalling that her country had been among the founding Member States of the Human Rights Council in 2006, she said it had since been very engaged in its cooperation with that body, and for that reason, Algeria had decided to pursue membership for the 2014-2016 period, and called on other States to support its candidacy.

CÉCILE MBALLA EYENGA ( Cameroon) said education and training were essential to "owning" human rights. Education was the most effective tool for generating and shaping values, attitudes, behaviour and knowledge towards the creation and consolidation of a real culture of peace and an environment conducive to sustainable development. In that context, the activities carried out by the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, since its inception, were crucial, particularly initiatives devoted to transitional justice. The Centre also promoted the sharing of experiences and best practices through national and regional workshops. In light of that, Cameroon hoped that the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights would provide the necessary resources to enable the Centre to continue addressing the region's increasing needs in the field of human rights.

ERVIN NINA ( Albania) said that the 2007 General Assembly resolution calling for a moratorium on the death penalty represented a natural progression towards full worldwide abolition. Expressing great concern at recent setbacks on the matter, he urged countries that had resumed

executions to reconsider their decision. Albania also remained deeply concerned at the rise in violence and intolerance against individuals, including those belonging to religious and other minorities. The country had co-hosted a high level conference on the subject earlier this year, and had presented its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council for the 2015-2017 term in hopes of stepping up its international engagement, he said. Describing Kosovo's progress as "truly remarkable", he encouraged every citizen there to vote in the upcoming local elections and to provide the best expression of democracy and human rights. Pledging his country's unreserved support for efforts to ensure justice and discourage impunity everywhere, he expressed deep concern about the fate of more than 1,800 people still missing in Kosovo. The region had much more to gain by looking forward and building on the best examples of cooperation, he said.

KAZUYOSHI UMEMOTO ( Japan) said his country engaged with bilateral human rights dialogues with various countries. Such talks, including with Myanmar and Iran, contributed to the amelioration of the human rights situations in those countries. Japan would continue its activities to promote and protect human rights both multilaterally and bilaterally. He called on the Syrian Government to bring its human rights violations to an end. Japan, together with the European Union, would submit a resolution calling for the improvement of the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The text included the issue of the abductions of Japanese nationals by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Out of the 17 Japanese citizens who were confirmed to have been abducted in the 1970s and 1980s, 12 had yet to be returned, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had failed to provide credible accounts of the whereabouts of those individuals. He also addressed the human rights situations in Iran, Myanmar and Cambodia, citing progress and remaining challenges.

TATIANA LESHKOVA ( Belarus), emphasizing her country's cooperation with the Human Rights Council and other relevant mechanisms, recalled that earlier this year, it had held an event jointly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), on the protection of victims of human trafficking, among other activities. Belarus had completed the 2010 cycle of the Universal Period Review and fulfilled almost all its recommendations. The Government was planning a number of events with OHCHR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in which both Government representatives and civil society actors could participate in the lead-up to the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, which would start in 2015. Describing several so-called "mature democracies" as being associated with human rights violations such as racial discrimination, manifestations of neo-fascism and ill-treatment of migrants, she also noted the emergence of a neo-Nazi force in Germany and violations of the rights of journalists in the United Kingdom. Sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States were unacceptable because they undermined economic and social rights in the affected countries, she said.

JIM MCLAY ( New Zealand) said no society, local or global, could expect to reach its full potential when it denied basic rights to more than half the population and the opportunity to participate fully in its economic, social, cultural, civil and political life. Too many women and girls around the world still faced multiple barriers that denied them access to quality education, health care, employment, property ownership and participation in decision-making and political processes. And too many women and girls continued to experience horrific sexual and gender-based violence and abuse. New Zealand was one of the 126 countries that had aligned themselves with the Ministerial Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, he said, adding that 13 years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), "we have a clear sense of what must be done to address this scourge". Equal attention should be paid to other fundamental challenges to the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, especially those subjected to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, he said.

ANA MARIE L. HERNANDO ( Philippines), aligning herself with ASEAN, said that a people-centred, human rights-based approach lay at the core of her country's national policies and programmes. The Government was committed to investing in people by empowering them, raising their participation in and integration into society, and protecting and promoting their rights. The Philippine Development Plan for 2011-2016 gave effect to President Benigno Aquino's social contract with the people through key strategies aimed at generating inclusive growth through pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, the reduction of mass poverty and the creation of decent jobs and employment opportunities. Welcoming the Declaration of the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which assigned a high priority to the relationship between migration and development, she said her country continued to advocate for the right to development.



IIIA MAINALI ( Nepal ) said his country attached great significance to human rights principles. At home, the 2007 Interim Constitution reaffirmed the nation's commitment to human rights by guaranteeing fundamental political, social, cultural and economic rights to the citizens. Several domestic laws guaranteed the rights of all sections of society, including women and children as well as marginalized and deprived communities. The Government had been implementing its Human Rights National Action Plan since 2004, and the current three-year cycle focused on vital areas such as education, culture, health, labour and employment, environment and sustainable development. In addition, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers had been established as Government focal points for coordinating human rights issues.

SEMERE AZAZI ( Eritrea ) said that very often some human rights were stressed while others were ignored, which placed a hierarchy on their promotion and protection. It was important to accord the same emphasis to all universally recognized rights, emphasized. "It is no exaggeration that every Eritrean family lost a son or a daughter or some other loved ones in the exercise of the fundamental right to self-determination," he said, adding that his country's priority had been to ensure peace and security while accelerating development. Despite some progress, there was a need for regional cooperation on peace and security so that Eritrea and its neighbours could give undivided attention to the full enjoyment of all human rights, he said.

SAMIRA A. ABUBAKAR ( Libya ) noted that 2013 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in 1993. She recalled that, during the High-level Segment of the General Assembly's sixty-eighth session, many events had been held to discuss issues relating to development and persons with disability, human rights education, food, decent housing, the right to clean water, migrants and the elderly, in the context of the post-2015 development framework. Preventing human rights violations was a top priority of Libya's Government, she said, highlighting her country's transition from dictatorship to democracy. The Government had adopted a transitional justice law and was drafting legislation to compensate women who had been tortured and raped, she said, adding that it would eliminate all laws that were not in compliance with human rights principles. Libya was preparing to accede to the International Convention on Enforced Disappearances, and would also determine a date for a visit by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, she said.

KADANGHA BARIKI LIMBYE ( Togo ) said his country had made the promotion and protection of human rights one of the pillars of its policies on social and economic development. For that reason, it had ratified or acceded to many regional and international instruments. At the national level, Togo had integrated the provisions of such conventions into its constitution. Togo had abolished the death penalty in 2009 and ratified the Convention against Torture as well as its Optional Protocol, he said, adding that the Government had created a national body to prevent torture. Togo had experienced a long crisis, and for that reason it had created a Commission of Justice, Truth and Reconciliation in 2009 to promote national reconciliation and investigate the politically motivated violence occurring between 1958 and 2005.

#### Right of Reply

The representative of Turkey, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, expressed regret that her counterpart from Greece had politicized the Committee by conveying a selective and one-sided interpretation of history. Some facts had been conveniently left untold, including that Turkish Cypriots — founding members of the State — had been forced out of Government institutions as well as the legislative and judicial organs of Cyprus in 1963. Atrocities against Turkish Cypriots were well documented in United Nations archives, she said.

Recalling that the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) had been deployed on the island back in 1964, she said that in the following 10 years, 180,000 Turkish Cypriots had been forced to live in enclaves that covered only 3 per cent of the island's total area, a situation considered a veritable siege by the then Secretary-General. The 1974 military coup in Cyprus had been instigated by the military regime then ruling Greece with the aim of annexing the island and achieving the long-standing dream of union with Greece. Turkey had intervened in the same year, acting within its rights and responsibilities as a Guarantor Power under the 1960 Agreements to protect Turkish Cypriots and prevent the annexation, she said.

The representative of Cyprus responded by expressing regret over continuing human rights violations and Turkey's selective interpretation of history. That country had invaded, and still occupied more than one third of Cyprus. The rights of Turkish Cypriots were assured, and about 95 per cent of them were able to move, work and study anywhere in Cyprus. They could participate fully in various events, and thousands of Turkish Cypriots were employed in both the public and private sectors. They received social insurance and State pensions, among other benefits. Since 2004, they had been receiving economic assistance from Greece and the European Union, he said, urging Turkey to withdraw its forces.

The representative of Syria replied to statements by delegates from Liechtenstein, Canada, Australia, Norway and Qatar, saying she regretted their failure to acknowledge the presence of terrorists who passed through Turkey and Jordan, going in and out of her country thanks to the financing provided by Saudi Arabia and Qatar. She said she was also appalled by the allegations made by Canada, a country that had committed all sorts of abuses against natives, including forcing 150,000 indigenous children to attend Christian schools.

Turning to Liechtenstein, she asked how such a small principality without any history could comment on a country with a millenary tradition. As for Qatar, she said the country was spreading lies about Syria while continuing to deny its own people the right of expression, noting that a poet who had criticized the regime had been sentenced to 15 years in prison. Qatar should review its constitution and observe how the Syrian Parliament worked, so that it would be able to provide its people with the chance to experience two things unknown to them — a constitution and a parliament.

The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea rebutted a statement by a delegate from Japan about abductions, stressing that the issue had been resolved. He urged Japan to liquidate its shameful past by providing compensation for "comfort women" forcibly employed by the Japanese army.

The representative of Japan said that his counterpart's insistence that the abduction issue had been resolved was contrary to their agreement and to facts, adding that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had changed its position. The issue of abductions must be resolved with a sense of urgency, he emphasized, calling for the immediate return of abducted Japanese nationals. It had also abducted nationals of other countries and should heed international concerns. Regarding its past aggression in Asia, he said Japan was facing its past squarely and had expressed deep remorse, adding that the current Government maintained that position.

The representative of Turkey rejected as "baseless" the accusations made by the Syrian delegation, saying that his country's position, and its contribution to international efforts to extend a helping hand to the Syrian people, was well known.

The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea rejected "misleading" remarks by his counterpart from Japan, saying his country had faithfully implemented the agreement. Japan should resolve issues relating to lost property and individual compensation, punish the perpetrators and issue a public apology, he said, adding that he wished Japan could understand that the lives of people in other countries was as important as those of its own people.

The representative of Saudi Arabia said the Syrian delegate was trying to divert attention from what was happening in her own country.

The representative of Japan said the issues of property and claims would be discussed during negotiations on the normalization of relations between the two countries.

The representative of Syria said her country would continue to hold Saudi Arabia accountable as long as it continued to finance the killing of Syrians by terrorists.

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