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## Sixth Committee

### Summary record of the 8th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 October 2019, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Arrocha Olabuenaga (Vice-Chair) . . . . . (Mexico)

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*In the absence of Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia), Mr. Arrocha Olabuenaga (Mexico), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

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

**Agenda item 76: Criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission** (*continued*)  
(A/74/142 and A/74/145)

1. **Mr. Proskuryakov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation considered the preventive measures developed to combat impunity for crimes committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission – work in which the General Assembly had participated directly – to be adequate to the scale of the task, and it welcomed the preparatory training provided to such personnel by States, peacekeeping operations and special political missions. In order to combat impunity more effectively, it was important for the Secretariat to inform States promptly when one of their nationals was suspected of committing a crime while on mission. Channels of communication between the Organization and States must therefore continue to be strengthened.

2. When allegations against international civil servants were investigated, the State of nationality must play the leading role in exercising jurisdiction. Without prejudice to the legal status of United Nations officials and experts on mission, it was important to ensure that they were not absolved of accountability for criminal acts committed in locations in which they were serving. The information received from States demonstrated that they had the necessary legal mechanisms, including both national laws and international instruments on inter-State cooperation, to bring their nationals to justice. His delegation thus saw no need to develop a new treaty on the matter.

3. The cases outlined in the report of the Secretary-General issued on 15 July 2019 (A/74/145) showed that the Secretariat and States were cooperating appropriately in the prosecution of United Nations officials and experts on mission and that incidents were investigated. Regrettably, however, in the report issued on 11 July 2019 (A/74/142), the section dealing with the policies and procedures of the United Nations Secretariat, funds and programmes failed to cover all entities of the United Nations system and contained no consolidated analysis. In particular, it would be interesting to have more detailed information about when those bodies sought the assistance of the State of nationality in conducting investigations and when the host State was approached for help. That topic could be addressed in the draft resolution on the item.

4. **Mr. Molefe** (South Africa) said his delegation recognized the courageous actions of United Nations officials and experts on mission, and other persons within the United Nations system who reported criminal activity and misconduct at the risk of personal prejudice. While it remained fully supportive of a multilateral convention to regulate the matter as a means of ensuring accountability and preventing future occurrences of criminal misconduct, his delegation would also continue to encourage the development of domestic legislation that vested local courts with the requisite jurisdiction over United Nations officials and experts on mission. His delegation noted the comments in the report of the Secretary-General of 15 July 2019 (A/74/145) that efforts were under way to standardize the delivery of induction training in conduct and discipline across all entities of the Secretariat, and that measures were being taken to expand the vetting process to include personnel being recruited for all other entities of the United Nations.

5. Member States and the United Nations should work together to close the gap between prescriptive and enforcement jurisdiction. His delegation called on Member States to prioritize the closing of jurisdictional gaps as a collective measure. Predeployment vetting procedures and training to align the values and conduct of personnel with those of the missions to which they were being deployed should be further strengthened as a means of preventive action to ensure that fewer crimes were committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission.

6. **Mr. Amaral Alves De Carvalho** (Portugal) said that United Nations officials and experts on mission made an invaluable contribution to peacebuilding while dealing with very difficult conditions in the field. The vast majority of them lived up to the very high standards of ethics and integrity required by the United Nations and the States in which they served, but any blameworthy behaviour could compromise the credibility of the United Nations and its staff. Impunity, or even the perception of undue protection being given to such persons, was detrimental to the Organization; the sound administration of justice was crucial to enable the United Nations to fulfil its mandate.

7. At the national level, States must ensure that they had the appropriate legal frameworks in place to enable them to exercise jurisdiction over crimes committed by their nationals when serving as United Nations officials and experts on mission. The United Nations and its Member States should also take measures to prevent such crimes from occurring at all. Portuguese law provided for the prosecution of United Nations officials and experts on mission for crimes committed within or

outside Portuguese territory, provided that the immunity of such officials or experts had been waived. That jurisdiction was exercised with international judicial cooperation, in compliance with the principle of *aut dedere aut judicare*. Preventive measures, such as predeployment training in conduct and discipline, were also in place.

8. **Ms. de Souza Schmitz** (Brazil) said that for years, United Nations personnel had been diligently working to have a positive impact in societies around the world. Yet every crime committed by United Nations officials or experts on mission tainted the credibility of all other workers of the Organization, compromising their ability to cooperate with Governments and the population in the field. Such crimes often affected the most vulnerable, who were normally the main beneficiaries of the Organization's activities. Her delegation welcomed the significant progress that had been made in addressing credible allegations of crimes that might have been committed by United Nations officials or experts on mission, and noted with satisfaction that three United Nations entities had for the first time submitted information about their policies and procedures for inclusion in the reports of the Secretary-General. However, her delegation also endorsed the Secretary-General's call for greater coherence and coordination of policies and procedures relating to the reporting, investigation, referral and follow-up of credible allegations.

9. All Member States should strive to overcome remaining legal challenges to asserting jurisdiction over crimes committed by their nationals when serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission. Member States whose domestic law did not envisage extraterritorial jurisdiction should benefit from international cooperation and assistance to help them put in place the necessary mechanisms, at their request. It was also important for the United Nations to promptly provide States with adequate information concerning criminal acts that might have been committed by their nationals when serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission.

10. The instances of sexual violence, harassment, exploitation and abuse listed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/74/145), and the number of such instances for which information from appropriate sources was not provided, gave cause for serious concern. Her delegation reiterated its support for the zero-tolerance policy in cases of sexual exploitation, abuse and other criminal conduct, while stressing the need to give due regard to the rights of victims and the rule of law in the implementation of the policy.

11. Brazil reiterated its steadfast support for measures aimed at fighting impunity for serious crimes, including those committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission. Ensuring that credible allegations were properly investigated, perpetrators brought to justice and redress made available to victims was key to upholding the values that inspired the work of the United Nations.

12. **Mr. Rittener** (Switzerland) said that his delegation was pleased that measures to improve reporting taken pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/196 had made it possible to simplify the reports of the Secretary-General without compromising their substantive value. The fact that 156 of the 190 allegations referred to Member States by the Secretary-General since 2008 had not been addressed painted a dire picture of the commitment of Member States to ensure accountability for crimes committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission. Member States must do more to respond to referrals and follow-up from the Secretary-General. The Secretariat should also continue to follow up with the States concerned several times per year.

13. It was regrettable that during the reporting period no additional States had submitted information concerning the national measures they had in place to exercise jurisdiction over their nationals serving as United Nations officials and experts on mission, given the importance of identifying any gaps in the legal frameworks of Member States. However, his delegation welcomed the comments of additional States on the 2006 report of the Group of Legal Experts and was encouraged to see that many of them had expressed support for the establishment of an international legal framework to ensure accountability. The potential added value of such a framework had been confirmed by an independent comparative study of a number of legal systems commissioned by Switzerland. His delegation strongly encouraged Member States that had not yet done so to respond to the recurring request by the General Assembly for comments on the report of the Group of Legal Experts.

14. His delegation invited all Member States to consider taking action on the Secretary-General's recommendation that they encourage the distinct legislative bodies of the United Nations specialized agencies and related organizations to help to ensure the coherence of policies and procedures relating to criminal allegations against their personnel with those related to United Nations officials and experts on mission. While ensuring that United Nations officials and experts on mission were held accountable for their actions required a joint effort by the United Nations and

Member States, the latter bore primary responsibility and must do more in that regard.

15. **Mr. Alarjani** (Saudi Arabia) said that the United Nations should continue to enforce a zero-tolerance policy in respect of public safety and criminal justice offences. States should adopt legislation incorporating international legal principles with a view to prosecuting United Nations officials and experts on mission who had committed criminal acts. The principle of the individual criminal responsibility of members of peacekeeping missions should be emphasized, without prejudice to the rights of the defendants. At the same time, his delegation commended the overwhelming majority of United Nations officials and peacekeepers for their exceptional service, which sometimes came at the cost of their own lives.

16. The human rights standards applicable to peacekeeping missions needed to be overhauled, and Member States should work together to ensure that United Nations officials and experts on mission who had committed crimes were held to account. Before staff members were deployed, they should receive training regarding the criminal law of host States. His delegation called on United Nations entities to develop reliable, impartial and transparent mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of humanitarian programmes. For instance, it would be useful for donor States, including his own, to receive detailed reports on the finances and chain of accountability of the agencies implementing such programmes.

17. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) said that crimes committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission, particularly sexual exploitation and abuse, must not go unpunished. In addition to their impact on the victims, such crimes also tarnished the reputation of the United Nations and the thousands of its staff members who served its ideals selflessly. Following an Egyptian initiative, the General Assembly now adopted a resolution on an annual basis concerning United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse. That resolution was a necessary step towards fostering mechanisms to tackle the problem.

18. Prosecution of United Nations experts and officials on mission should be the exclusive responsibility of their State of nationality, which should take legal action as soon as the matter was referred to it by the United Nations. Yet, numerous legal and practical obstacles might arise; for instance, the criminal law of the State of nationality might not apply to offences committed abroad, or international mechanisms for the collection of evidence might be inadequate. Such issues

must not, however, enable the perpetrators to escape with impunity. Nor could they justify novel legal theories according to which the perpetrators could be prosecuted by States other than their State of nationality; any such initiative would not enjoy the necessary consensus. Instead, the international community should intensify its efforts to close existing gaps, including by building the capacities of States to ensure criminal accountability.

19. Egyptian criminal law provided for the prosecution of Egyptian nationals serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission. Under the Criminal Code, any Egyptian who, while abroad, committed an offence recognized under the Code was liable to prosecution upon returning to Egypt, and the offence was punishable in accordance with the law of the country in which it had been committed. Egypt selected only the most qualified personnel to serve on United Nations missions. They underwent comprehensive training programmes and had shown high rates of compliance.

20. **Mr. Ademo** (Ethiopia) said that in order to preserve the credibility of the United Nations, its officials and personnel must adhere strictly to the laws of their host countries. Member States should put mechanisms in place to ensure that they were able to hold their nationals serving as United Nations officials and experts on mission accountable for any crimes they might commit. His Government was fully committed to working with the United Nations to ensure the criminal accountability of any of its nationals who abused their immunities.

21. The importance of prevention could not be over-emphasized. To ensure that officials and other personnel were able to fulfil their role as protectors and role models, effective screening measures should be in place to ensure that they were of good character, and they should receive appropriate training prior to deployment. The training provided by his country covered conduct, discipline, the obligation to observe the laws of the host State and the potential consequences of failure to comply with those laws.

22. His delegation called on Member States to ensure that they had jurisdiction to prosecute their nationals serving as United Nations officials and experts on mission. Cooperation between the United Nations, countries hosting United Nations agencies and other Member States was also important in ensuring accountability. His Government stood ready to make the necessary efforts to ensure the success of the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

23. **Mr. Nyanid** (Cameroon) said that in order for the privileges and immunities extended to representatives of the Members of the United Nations and officials of the Organization to continue to be a tool in the service of peace, the Organization must remain credible and impartial. Moreover, its officials and experts on mission must comply with local laws and honour their private legal obligations, in accordance with the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and the model status-of-forces agreement for peacekeeping operations, or the Regulations Governing the Status, Basic Rights and Duties of Officials other than Secretariat Officials and Experts on Mission, as applicable.

24. Officials and experts on mission must be held accountable for their actions, in keeping with their human rights, including the right to a fair trial. If the law enforcement agencies of a Member State wished to take a formal statement from or bring charges against a United Nations official or expert on mission in relation to acts performed in the course of his or her official duties, they must do so only in accordance with international law, which stipulated that in such cases a written request for waiver of immunity must be submitted to the United Nations. It was important to remember that only the Secretary-General could and should waive immunity granted to United Nations officials. It was also important to maintain the civility required in international relations while ensuring accountability in a manner that did not prejudice the interests of the Organization. Member States should cooperate promptly with the United Nations by exchanging information, facilitating investigations and prosecuting any of their nationals serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission against whom allegations had been made, in accordance with their domestic laws and the procedures established by the United Nations.

25. His Government considered that if a United Nations investigation led to the discovery of prima facie evidence suggesting that a criminal act falling under the jurisdiction of a Member State might have been committed, the Organization should be able to inform the Member State concerned of such evidence. Moreover, there should be closer cooperation in cases where a Member State asked the United Nations for access to information, documents or witnesses for the purposes of an investigation by the national law enforcement authorities or a prosecution before the national courts. Cameroon was committed to following up on all requests for information from the Secretary-General, provided that the provision of the requested information was permissible under Cameroonian law

and would not prejudice any investigation being carried out by the national authorities. Cameroonian law provided for national jurisdiction over any crime committed abroad by a citizen or resident of Cameroon, provided that the crime was punishable under the laws of both Cameroon and the place in which the act was committed. Cameroon exercised its jurisdiction over crimes, in particular serious crimes, committed abroad by Cameroonian nationals serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission once the national authorities received an official complaint or report.

26. His delegation urged host countries to continue to take appropriate measures to protect United Nations officials and experts on mission, including by educating the general public to ensure that they were treated appropriately. Preventive measures such as awareness-raising and training, including on ethics and standards of conduct, should be incorporated into the recruitment process to ensure the appointment of trustworthy officials and experts. His Government carried out background checks to ensure that personnel made available to the United Nations were irreproachable and had never been involved in the commission of a crime. Cameroon was home to the International School for Security Forces, which provided training in peacekeeping techniques and standards of conduct for United Nations peacekeepers and others from Cameroon and beyond.

27. His Government welcomed cooperation with the United Nations in various activities, such as the assessment of members of the Cameroonian police by the United Nations Selection Assistance and Assessment Team in September 2019, and hoped that the Organization would enhance its support for peacekeeping training centres. By increasing its investment in the training of peacekeeping personnel, the United Nations could help reduce the incidence of crimes committed by them. His Government was open to the idea of elaborating an international instrument to address the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission.

28. **Mr. Mundanda** (Zambia) said that his delegation appreciated that a number of specialized agencies and organizations had introduced new comprehensive policies and procedures aimed at preventing various forms of misconduct and criminal acts. Zambia strongly supported the United Nations zero-tolerance policy towards criminal activity and abuse by military, police and civilian personnel on mission. It was also committed to the fulfilment of the Security Council's objectives of maintaining peace and security and promoting friendly relations and cooperation among States. To that end, Zambia would ensure that its nationals selected to serve

as United Nations officials or experts on mission were well trained and properly vetted so that they discharged their duties with integrity and distinction.

29. Although the Criminal Code of Zambia contained no specific provisions regarding liability for acts committed by Zambian nationals while serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission, it did provide for the liability of persons who committed acts in a foreign jurisdiction that were classified as offences under the Criminal Code. Furthermore, it provided that a conviction in a foreign jurisdiction for an act classified as an offence under the Criminal Code would be deemed to be a conviction under that Code.

30. Strong supervision and leadership within missions were critical to ensuring that United Nations officials and experts on mission did not commit acts that undermined the Organization's work. The Government of Zambia was therefore investing in programmes designed to instil high ethical standards and moral principles in nationals selected to serve as United Nations officials or experts on mission. Prior to deployment, selected personnel were vetted by the relevant authorities. They were also trained in conduct, ethics and discipline, and were informed of the obligation of all United Nations personnel to respect the laws of host States, and of the consequences of failing to do so. In line with United Nations requirements, personnel selected to be deployed to field missions were screened for criminal records, human rights violations and disciplinary records.

31. Adequate protection must be given not only to victims of abuse and criminal conduct but also to witnesses and whistle-blowers. There was currently no record of any cases in which Zambian nationals serving as United Nations officials and experts on mission had committed serious crimes while fulfilling their functions. However, should such allegations arise, they would be investigated and prosecuted in accordance with Zambian law.

32. **Mr. Ly** (Senegal) said that his delegation paid tribute to the devotion and professionalism of United Nations officials and experts on mission who worked every day to maintain international peace and security. A contributor of peacekeeping personnel since its independence in 1960, Senegal had suffered the tragic loss of four of its nationals serving in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic as a result of a helicopter accident in September 2019. Nevertheless, nothing could exempt United Nations officials and experts on mission from their responsibilities to both the United Nations and local populations.

33. Senegal was making every effort to fully implement the zero-tolerance policy on criminal conduct by United Nations officials and experts on mission. The President of Senegal, who was a member of the circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations, had issued a directive calling on all defence and security forces operating as part of peacekeeping missions to comply strictly with relevant ethical standards, and instructing commanders to ensure that all breaches of such standards were duly investigated and, where appropriate, punished. That high-level political commitment was supplemented by national legislation to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of Senegalese nationals who committed serious crimes abroad. The State of nationality should have precedence over the host country in addressing such breaches. In that regard, he appreciated the Organization's efforts to refer credible allegations of criminal conduct to the State of nationality and encouraged all States to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

34. Senegal had provided information to the Secretary-General for a national point of contact in order to facilitate communication and cooperation with the United Nations on procedures initiated at the national level. It also provided predeployment and in-mission training for troops and imposed disciplinary and judicial sanctions on soldiers in case of a crime or misconduct. Senegal had also supported the initiative for the adoption of a new multilateral treaty on mutual legal assistance and extradition for the domestic prosecution of the most serious international crimes.

35. Much remained to be done in order to strengthen criminal accountability. States that had not yet done so must take all appropriate steps to ensure that offences did not go unpunished and that the perpetrators were prosecuted. It was also necessary to promote a coordinated approach between the United Nations, national authorities and the host country and to correct any shortcomings in accountability, especially where the host country's ability to exercise criminal jurisdiction was limited. The absence of accountability undermined the rule of law, and inaction in response to serious crimes compounded the suffering of victims. Member States had a moral duty to ensure that privileges and immunities granted to United Nations personnel were never used as a pretext to commit reprehensible acts with impunity.

36. **Mr. Yedla** (India) said that India supported the Organization's policy of zero tolerance towards misconduct and the commission of crimes by United Nations officials and experts on mission, as even a few

such cases undermined the image and credibility of the United Nations system. His delegation also welcomed the initiatives carried out by the Secretary-General in relation to incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse reportedly committed by certain individuals involved in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Indeed, India was the first country to have contributed to the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

37. A solution to the problem of accountability had remained elusive because of the complex legal aspects relating to the sovereignty and jurisdiction of Member States. The legal personality of the United Nations, under which some immunities or privileges necessary for operations in Member States were accorded, and the functional capacity or willingness of Member States to investigate and prosecute the accused, had further complicated the matter. The immunity from prosecution in national courts enjoyed by the United Nations as an organization should not be confused with freedom of United Nations officials and experts from responsibility for their criminal acts or omissions. However, the United Nations itself could only take disciplinary measures and did not exercise criminal jurisdiction. It was unclear whether investigations that it conducted could be accepted as evidence in criminal law proceedings in Member States.

38. The primary responsibility to bring perpetrators to justice rested with Member States. The State of nationality of an alleged offender must be promptly informed and consulted by the United Nations and must act in a timely manner, establish and exercise jurisdiction, investigate and prosecute, where appropriate. Member States that did not assert extraterritorial jurisdiction over crimes committed abroad by their nationals should be encouraged and assisted in updating their national laws to provide for such jurisdiction and to prosecute any misconduct of their nationals serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission. Such laws should also provide for international assistance for the investigation and prosecution of the crimes committed. The United Nations could compile a list of Member States that had implemented the nationality principle, thereby revealing potential jurisdictional gaps. In that regard, the Indian Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure had provisions for addressing extraterritorial offences committed by nationals and for seeking and providing assistance in criminal matters. The Indian Extradition Act of 1962 dealt with extradition of fugitive criminals and allowed for extradition under a bilateral treaty or an international convention.

39. Although the United Nations had worked hard to establish clear standards and rules by which its

personnel must abide, much more progress was needed. The development of uniform rules, investigation capacity, organizational, managerial and command accountability, and individual disciplinary, financial and criminal accountability would help to address the issue effectively. A policy of zero tolerance for any criminal acts committed by United Nations personnel must be implemented and provisions to enforce accountability strengthened so that no crimes went unpunished and the image and work of the United Nations were not tarnished.

40. **Mr. Gaspard** (Haiti) said that, having hosted peacekeeping operations for many years, Haiti attached great importance to the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission. His delegation firmly supported the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/74/145). Member States that had not yet done so must address the gaps in their domestic law that prevented them from exercising jurisdiction over crimes committed by their nationals while serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission. Indeed, his own country's criminal law did not have provisions for addressing extraterritorial offences committed by nationals while carrying out official functions on behalf of the Government of Haiti. To that end, he supported the proposal of the Group of Legal Experts for the adoption of an international convention on such offences.

41. It was important for Governments to provide comments along with the information transmitted about the handling by the State of nationality of the case of a United Nations official or expert on mission alleged to have committed a crime. For many of the cases cited in the Secretary-General's report, no information had been provided on the status of investigations and prosecutorial action. In other cases, the only information provided was that disciplinary action had been taken, which his delegation considered to be nothing but an administrative measure, or that criminal prosecution had been dropped, without further explanation. Yet, in some situations, particularly in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse of a minor, criminal prosecution was essential to repair the harm caused.

42. If States continued operating in that manner, they might be establishing some of impunity that could seriously undermine the rights of victims. The United Nations should also act in a transparent manner throughout the process and both the United Nations and the State of nationality of the victim must be kept informed at all times. Ultimately, the credibility of United Nations peacekeeping operations was at stake.



43. Lastly, the legislative bodies of the United Nations specialized agencies and related organizations must ensure the coherence and coordination of policies and procedures relating to the reporting of credible allegations revealing that a crime might have been committed by personnel of such agencies and organizations. Member States, the United Nations and civil society must work together to identify best practices in that regard.

44. **Ms. Anukam** (Nigeria) said that her Government had sent special teams to sensitize Nigerian troops serving in peacekeeping missions regarding the implications of any untoward actions for themselves, Nigeria and the United Nations. In general, more targeted orientation and awareness campaigns were needed concerning the risks of irresponsible behaviour. Nigeria supported the referral of cases of alleged criminal conduct to the State of nationality of the official or expert concerned, for investigation and possible prosecution. States should report back to the Organization on the steps taken and adopt the necessary measures to prosecute their nationals for any offence committed while on mission, including by adapting their legislation to guarantee that jurisdiction could be exercised. Her Government was providing recreational facilities for Nigerian peacekeepers serving on missions abroad to boost morale and had approved a proposal to grant them regular leave to visit their families and loved ones.

45. Victims of sexual exploitation and abuse should not be stigmatized; rather, they should be rehabilitated. Her Government had contributed to the United Nations trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and called on other Member States to do the same. It was necessary to establish a working environment that was conducive to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse by changing the organizational culture of missions, increasing the participation of women, improving the welfare of personnel, investigating and prosecuting suspects in a timely manner and providing training programmes. Exemplary behaviour should be rewarded in order to encourage others, while bad behaviour should be punished without hesitation.

46. **Mr. Koba** (Indonesia) said that his country currently provided 2,800 military and police officers to nine peacekeeping missions around the world. Service in a peacekeeping mission was a noble duty and should never be used to excuse or justify a wrongful act or crime. All United Nations officials and experts on mission must adhere to the highest standards and respect local laws and customs. If they committed violations, the law must take its course. The Indonesian Criminal

Code allowed for the establishment of criminal jurisdiction over Indonesian nationals wherever they committed crimes, and over any offenders, regardless of their nationality, if the national interest of Indonesia was affected. The necessary tools for judicial cooperation with other States, such as legislation on extradition and on mutual legal assistance, were in place.

47. Effective predeployment training was one way of ensuring that peacekeepers from all over the world adhered to high standards of conduct. However, training required investment, supported by partnerships among Member States. Indonesia was pleased to offer its peacekeeping centre as an international training hub. In addition, innovative training approaches, such as triangular partnerships, could be beneficial. Indonesia would host triangular partnership projects in 2020–2021, with the aim of providing quality training for peacekeepers in South-East Asia and beyond. Indonesia would also like to explore the possibility of organizing joint training to support co-deployment between troop-contributing countries.

48. **Mr. Lasri** (Morocco) said that offences committed by United Nations officials or experts on mission had a detrimental effect on the fulfilment of the Organization's mandates and tarnished its relations with host countries. Combating impunity was essential in order to preserve the credibility of the United Nations. His delegation fully supported the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, because a comprehensive, system-wide approach was needed in order to combat sexual exploitation and abuse committed by uniformed personnel, civilian staff and experts on mission. He urged all United Nations system organizations to continue applying policies and procedures aimed at countering such acts. There was a need to improve cooperation and the exchange of information, both among States and between the United Nations and those States whose nationals allegedly committed serious criminal offences while employed by the Organization.

49. Any criminal offence committed by a United Nations official or expert on mission should be subject to thorough investigation and prosecution in the competent national courts of the State of nationality of the official or expert. Of course, for that to be possible, the United Nations must refer allegations of criminal conduct to the State of nationality in question. However, ending impunity was not enough. Preventive measures were also essential. United Nations officials and experts must receive proper training, tailored to the local context, with a view to reducing the risk of any behaviour that might constitute an offence. Morocco, a major troop-contributing country, provided its troops



with high-quality, comprehensive predeployment training, which included information on sexual exploitation and abuse, human rights and international humanitarian law.

50. Member States must combine efforts to ensure that offences committed by United Nations personnel did not go unpunished, in keeping with the universal principles of fair trial, including the presumption of innocence, respect of the rights of the defence and victims' right of access to justice. On the other hand, when allegations against United Nations officials or experts were determined by a United Nations administrative investigation to be unfounded, the Organization must take appropriate measures to restore the credibility and reputation of such officials and experts, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/196.

51. **Mr. Ligoya** (Malawi) said that his delegation welcomed the reports of the Secretary-General on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission (A/74/142 and A/74/145). Unfortunately, the information contained therein on referrals of credible allegations was not encouraging, as most of the referred cases remained unresolved.

52. With the number of United Nations officials and experts on mission rising, all Member States must exercise vigilance. It was the responsibility of Member States to ensure that their nationals were held accountable for any crimes they committed while serving the United Nations. Malawi conducted predeployment training for its peacekeeping troops, including briefings on international law and the law of the host State, with a view to preventing any criminal conduct. In addition, troops were required to sign declarations pledging to observe the law and all relevant guidelines.

53. The Penal Code and the Geneva Conventions Act of Malawi established cross-border jurisdiction over serious crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. They provided for jurisdiction based on nationality and in respect of crimes committed abroad. Greater international cooperation was needed to end impunity and safeguard the integrity of the United Nations.

54. **Mr. Kemble** (Netherlands) said that his delegation welcomed the commitment of the Secretary-General to combating criminal misconduct by United Nations officials and experts on mission, as well as his repeated efforts to obtain information on cases referred to States for investigation and prosecution. However, as noted in his report issued on 15 July 2019 (A/74/145), some States had yet to provide any information, even though many of the cases had been referred as far back as 2008.

His delegation had lost all hope that those who had committed criminal misconduct a decade ago would be held to account, but it was unacceptable for States to simply refuse to provide information.

55. He suggested that, in cases where efforts to obtain such information had failed, the Secretary-General should ask a member of the circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations – a group comprising 87 sitting and former Heads of State and Government – to raise the matter with the Member State concerned. Such a move would bring the matter to the attention of senior government officials and alert them to the fact that their country had yet to take action. In addition, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2272 (2016), the Secretary-General should prevent Member States refusing to take appropriate steps to investigate allegations, hold perpetrators to account and inform him of the progress of their investigations from participating in current or future peacekeeping operations.

56. He noted with appreciation the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen procedures for reporting misconduct, harmonize investigation standards across the United Nations system and apply a victim-centred approach, as set out in his report dated 11 July 2019 (A/74/142). His delegation fully supported the Secretary-General's strategy to improve the Organization's system-wide approach to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse, launched in 2017, and welcomed the work done to date, including the issuance of administrative instructions and the implementation of new policies and measures.

57. His Government had reviewed those policies and measures, including the proposed amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules contained in the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/74/289), and supported the proposed revision to the rule on deductions and contributions to provide a clearer basis for the Organization to make voluntary deductions in accordance with the amounts reflected in family support court orders in cases where staff members failed to comply with such orders. His delegation also supported the proposed deletion of an exception to the general prohibition on sexual activity with children and urged the Secretary-General to issue the related administrative instruction as soon as possible.

58. In 2018, the Netherlands had announced that it no longer wished to be seen as enabling or financing United Nations entities that refused to prevent, investigate and sanction misconduct, and that before contributing financially to a United Nations entity, it would require

that entity to establish and apply appropriate procedures for addressing misconduct. As a result of that policy, the Netherlands had suspended its financial contributions to the United Nations Environment Programme, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. He urged all Member States, in particular the members of the Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment, to follow his country's example.

59. His delegation noted with appreciation that the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, which currently stood at \$2 million, had helped to elevate the voices of victims and to give them the opportunity to learn new skills and trades, thereby supporting their reintegration into community life without fear of retribution or stigma. He urged all Member States to contribute to the trust fund.

**Agenda item 83: The rule of law at the national and international levels (A/74/139)**

60. **Mr. Nasimfar** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that respect for the rule of law at the national and international levels was essential to maintaining international peace and security and achieving socioeconomic development. It was vital to maintain a balance between the national and international dimensions of the rule of law. The Movement remained of the view that the latter dimension needed greater attention on the part of the United Nations.

61. Efforts to foster international relations based on the rule of law should be guided by the principle of sovereign equality of States, which meant, inter alia, that all States should be able to participate equally in law-making processes at the international level. All States should comply with their obligations under treaties and customary international law. Selective application of international law must be avoided and the legitimate and legal rights of States under it must be respected. The prohibition of the threat or use of force in international relations and peaceful settlement of disputes were the cornerstones of the rule of law at the international level. It was therefore essential for Member States to remain committed to a rules-based regime in the conduct of their respective relations with other Member States.

62. The Movement strongly encouraged Member States to identify and pursue measures that would contribute to peace and prosperity in the world and to a just and equitable world order based on the Charter and

international law. The Movement also encouraged States to settle disputes peacefully, using the mechanisms and tools established under international law. It called upon the General Assembly and the Security Council to make use, whenever appropriate, of their right under Article 96 of the Charter to request advisory opinions on legal questions from the International Court of Justice. Human rights, the rule of law and democracy were interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and all States should fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

63. The Movement remained concerned about the use of unilateral measures, which had a negative impact on the rule of law and international relations. No State or group of States had the authority to deprive other States of their legal rights for political reasons. The Movement condemned any attempt to destabilize the democratic and constitutional order in any of its members. Close cooperation and coordination among the principal organs was essential if the United Nations was to remain relevant and capable of dealing with threats and challenges. The Movement remained concerned about the continuing encroachment by the Security Council on the functions and powers of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Assembly should play a leading role in promoting and coordinating efforts to strengthen the rule of law.

64. At the same time, the international community should not supplant national authorities in their task of establishing or strengthening the rule of law at the country level. National ownership of rule of law activities was important, as was strengthening Member States' ability to fulfil their international obligations, including through enhanced technical assistance and capacity-building. United Nations funds and programmes should provide such assistance, however, solely at the request of Governments and strictly within their respective mandates. Account should be taken of the customs and the political and socioeconomic features of each country, and the imposition of pre-established models should be avoided.

65. The lack of an agreed definition of the rule of law should be taken into account in the preparation of reports and in the collection, classification and evaluation of data on issues directly or indirectly related to the rule of law. The data-gathering activities of United Nations bodies should not lead to unilateral formulation of rule of law indicators or ranking of countries. Any indicators should be agreed upon by Member States in an open and transparent manner.

66. The Movement reiterated its position welcoming the adoption of General Assembly resolution 67/19, which accorded to Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations and reflected the international community's long-standing, principled support for the rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination, independence and a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. The Movement reaffirmed its support of the application by the State of Palestine for admission to full membership in the United Nations, which had been pending before the Security Council since 2011.

67. While the Movement underlined the importance of freedom of opinion and expression, as provided under article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it wished to emphasize that morality, public order and the rights and freedoms of others must be recognized and respected in the exercise of that freedom. Freedom of expression was not absolute; it should be exercised with responsibility and in accordance with the relevant international human rights law and instruments.

68. **Mr. Jaiteh** (Gambia), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group was deeply concerned about the proliferation of hate speech and incitement to violence. It welcomed, therefore, the two urgent initiatives set in motion by the Secretary-General, namely the drawing up of a United Nations plan of action to fully mobilize the system to tackle hate speech, led by the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, and the effort led by the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations to help to ensure the safety of religious sanctuaries.

69. The Group remained committed to the rule of law at the national and international levels and commended the United Nations for continuing to provide support to rule of law and security institutions in very diverse settings, in particular in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and for its efforts to ensure accountability and pursue a preventative approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

70. The dissemination of international law was one of the best means of strengthening the rule of law at the international level. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation could provide a vehicle for such dissemination, and technology could also be useful. The dissemination of international law could help to strengthen international peace and security and promote friendly relations and cooperation among States. Indeed, States had an obligation under the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1997 Additional Protocols thereto to disseminate international humanitarian law.

71. At the regional level, the African Union Commission on International Law played a valuable role in disseminating international law. The Commission was an advisory body established as part of efforts to accelerate socioeconomic development in Africa through the promotion of research in all fields. It encouraged the teaching, study, publication and dissemination of literature on international law, in particular the laws of the African Union, with a view to promoting acceptance and respect for the principles of international law, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and respect for the Union and recourse to its organs. The work of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization offered a good example of bilateral cooperation in disseminating information and exchanging views and experiences relating to international law in order to strengthen the rule of law.

72. At the multilateral level, the United Nations played an important role in disseminating and promoting international law, and the Group called upon the Secretariat to explore ways of further enhancing that role in order to strengthen the rule of law.

73. **Mr. Chaboureau** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the United Nations was to be commended for its efforts to strengthen the rule of law. While climate change, forced displacement, new technologies and the proliferation of hate speech and incitement to violence certainly posed new challenges, such trends must not be used as a pretext for undermining the rule of law.

74. The Organization's assistance in building national capacity to strengthen the rule of law was crucial for addressing worrying global trends. He welcomed its efforts to foster effective, inclusive, transparent and functioning justice, corrections and security institutions, including in Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The European Union fully agreed with the need to reassert the centrality of the individual and the community in all efforts to prevent and reduce violence and insecurity. An integrated, multisectoral approach was needed, with support for police and security forces, the justice sector, parliaments, civil society organizations and local communities.

75. The European Union was committed to ending impunity and promoting responses that addressed the rights, needs and expectations of victims and communities. It welcomed the Organization's relentless

efforts to facilitate the realization of the right to justice for all persons, in particular those in situations of vulnerability. Ensuring security and justice for women and girls was essential to sustaining peace and to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 5, on gender equality, and 6, on peace, justice and strong institutions.

76. The European Union commended the role played by the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law in the joint planning and delivery of assistance to police, justice and corrections areas by various United Nations entities. It welcomed the direction provided by the Council for the work of the United Nations peace operations when supporting national authorities in the areas of police, justice and corrections, as well as the progress made in prioritizing rule of law support in the context of mission transitions.

77. In the light of the link between corruption and conflict, the European Union looked forward to the special session of the General Assembly against corruption, to be held in 2021. It supported the efforts of the United Nations to strengthen criminal justice responses to terrorism and violent extremism, in accordance with international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law. The European Union urged all States that continued to impose and apply the death penalty to establish a moratorium with a view to abolishing it.

78. The European Union supported the use by States of international justice mechanisms, including by accepting the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice or through other international tribunals, to resolve inter-State disputes and to uphold a rules-based international legal order. International treaties and binding decisions were essential for regulating international relations and should be interpreted and implemented in good faith. The impartiality and independence of international courts and tribunals were of the utmost importance to preserving the rule of law.

79. Member States had the primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting serious crimes under international law. When national legal systems failed, however, owing to a lack of political will or the capacity to genuinely act, justice was delayed and conflicts were prolonged. The European Union strongly supported, therefore, the work of international criminal tribunals, which, in addition to being powerful deterrents, helped to ensure accountability and end impunity, thereby fostering trust and reconciliation and bringing about sustainable peace.

80. The European Union therefore strongly supported the work of the International Criminal Court and would continue to make every effort to preserve the integrity

and promote the universality of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The European Union deeply regretted the withdrawal of Burundi and the Philippines from the Statute, and encouraged the Governments of Malaysia and Ukraine to proceed with its ratification. It also supported the work of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone.

81. The European Union supported independent mechanisms, commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions in response to widespread human rights violations, and measures to bring perpetrators to justice. It was confident that the General Assembly would allocate the necessary resources to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. The European Union was pleased that the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar was now operational and that all the evidence collected by the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar had been transferred to the Independent Investigative Mechanism.

82. Turning to the subtopic of sharing best practices and ideas to promote respect for international law among States, he said that a key objective included in European Union treaties was the observance and development of international law, including respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The European Commission oversaw the application of European Union law, including the aforementioned treaties, international treaties and agreements concluded by the Union, and legislative acts adopted by its institutions, under the control of the Court of Justice of the European Union. Matters related to the application of European Union law could be referred to the Court by the European Commission, member States and private persons.

83. Strengthening the rule of law was the responsibility of all. Democracy, human rights and the rule of law were mutually reinforcing. The rule of law was not only a constitutional principle of the European Union, but also a foreign policy objective.

84. **Mr. Jensen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), said that the report of the Secretary-General rightly focused on troubling trends that were creating challenges for national and international rule of law structures. In many parts of the world, there was

considerable opposition to multilateralism and a negative slide towards weaker rule of law, which was undermining the protection of human rights. The choice of subtopic for the Committee's debate of sharing best practices and ideas to promote respect for international law among States was apt, therefore.

85. The 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, to be held in December 2019, would be an opportunity for States to promote respect for international humanitarian law and cross-regional cooperation on a wide range of issues. The independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar was also an example of effective cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. Human Rights Council resolution 39/2, which had led to the establishment of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, had been an initiative of the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Impunity and the denial of justice had severely eroded the rule of law in Myanmar, and the perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and war crimes, in that country and elsewhere, must be brought to justice.

86. The Nordic countries staunchly supported the International Criminal Court and the various international criminal tribunals, and were committed to ending impunity and ensuring accountability for serious crimes. The Court must continue to work independently and undeterred, in accordance with the jurisdiction conferred upon it by the Rome Statute.

87. **Mr. Roughton** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Canada and Australia, said that the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the other key instruments of the rules-based international order had laid the foundation for a relatively stable and prosperous post-war period. The rule of law was embedded in the Charter of the United Nations and was essential for ensuring just and effective governance at the national and international levels. The Geneva Conventions were evidence of the international community's capacity to achieve consensus and agree on fundamental, universal and legally binding obligations.

88. The scope, scale and complexity of the challenges facing the world were enormous. Many of those challenges were not constrained by national borders, inhabited unseen virtual spaces or involved non-traditional actors, which created uncertainty. The degree of interconnectedness between people, communities, organizations and States was greater than ever before. Unprecedented events were occurring more frequently and being broadcast across the globe instantly.

89. While new and emerging threats such as unlawful cyberactivity, security challenges in space and online terrorism and violent extremism raised difficult questions for legal experts and policymakers, they should be addressed through the prism of existing international law and the Charter. He urged States to adhere to the rule of law at the national and international levels, with a view to ensuring stability, freedom and prosperity for all, and encouraged them to initiate and welcome dialogue about the rule of law, consider what adherence to the rule of law meant in practice, and share ideas and best practices.

90. The United Nations was instrumental in translating the rule of law into practical measures that improved people's lives. It had contributed to building effective, inclusive and functioning justice institutions, ensuring accountability for human rights violations and curbing corruption. In particular, he acknowledged the work of the Rule of Law Unit and the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, whose remit included taking into account new realities and actors in the field of the rule of law.

91. In engaging in such efforts and with one another, Member States should be guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter. They should be heartened by their own proven ability to achieve consensus and agree to be legally bound by commitments, and should reflect on the benefits of a rules-based international order.

92. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that the rule of law at the national level and the rule of law at the international level were complementary. At the national level, the rule of law was rooted in compliance with the Constitution and domestic laws. At the international level, it was rooted in respect for the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the obligation to settle disputes by peaceful means and to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

93. Nicaragua was firmly committed to the rule of law and acknowledged the responsibility that States had to consolidate democracy, sovereignty and fairness in all areas. It respected the sovereignty of States and their right to self-determination. It had every confidence in the International Court of Justice, whose work contributed to the promotion, consolidation and dissemination of the rule of law and was essential to the fulfilment of commitments to ensure the sovereign equality of all States.

94. Since its adoption over 70 years ago, the Charter of the United Nations had contributed to maintaining international peace and security. However, some of the

major powers were acting in a manner that was incompatible with the principles of the Charter, in an attempt to control developing countries and undermine their right to self-determination and political independence.

95. The only way to address global challenges and build a better world for future generations was through multilateralism, which was the path to social justice and peace. Peaceful coexistence could only be achieved if the norms of international law were respected. His Government rejected, therefore, the imposition of unilateral coercive economic measures, which were an obstacle to efforts to eradicate poverty and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Nicaragua would continue to promote multilateralism, with a view to achieving peace and stability and safeguarding the rights of its people.

96. **Mr. Marani** (Argentina) said that justice and peace were complementary objectives, and combating impunity for serious violations of human rights was an essential element of the strengthening of the rule of law. Argentina was therefore grateful for the efforts of the United Nations to support the strengthening of the rule of law in Member States, particularly in relation to holding the perpetrators of serious crimes under international law to account.

97. Argentina called for universal ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which played a central role in combating impunity and was thus a key element of the rule of law at the international level. His country welcomed the activation of the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, which reaffirmed that justice and the law prevailed over the use of force in international relations.

98. One of the pillars of the rule of law was the peaceful settlement of disputes, in which the International Court of Justice played a central role. The Secretary-General could also be requested to exercise his good offices for the peaceful settlement of disputes. However, in order for any means of peaceful settlement to succeed, the parties concerned must act in good faith and negotiate when called upon to do so by United Nations organs, including the General Assembly.

99. The Secretary-General had highlighted the importance of the rule of law for accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Argentina was committed to achieving Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, and would intensify its efforts at the national, regional and international levels to promote access to justice for all, in particular marginalized and vulnerable groups. At the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development,

Argentina, in its capacity as a member of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, had submitted a joint statement in support of that Goal.

100. Events such as the high-level political forum facilitated the exchange of ideas and best practices and contributed to respect for international law among States. South-South cooperation was also an effective and efficient tool for building capacities and exchanging experience with regard to truth, justice and reparation processes and processes aimed at ensuring the non-recurrence of serious international crimes. All Member States had a responsibility to strengthen the rule of law at the national and international levels. Only by working together in a cross-cutting manner and by engaging in dialogue with all relevant stakeholders would they be able to translate into reality the commitments made.

101. **Mr. Lasri** (Morocco) said that the United Nations steered and ensured the sustainability of the international system through various activities and mechanisms aimed at promoting the rule of law. He noted with appreciation the Organization's efforts to support and assist Member States in strengthening the rule of law. His country's commitment to promoting the rule of law at the international level was evidenced by its foreign policy, which was aligned with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

102. It was useful for Member States to share their experiences and practices regarding the implementation of the rule of law. Morocco had developed an innovative South-South cooperation model and had concluded a number of bilateral agreements, under which it shared knowledge, expertise, resources and technology with other States. His Government also pursued triangular cooperation with international donors and other African States. In addition, the country's training programme for African imams, which covered topics such as Islamic studies and information and communications technology, contributed to the promotion of a culture of peace, based on dialogue and religious tolerance.

103. In addition to adhering to international treaties, Morocco worked to promote peace and security by supporting the counter-terrorism efforts of other States. It would continue to be a reliable partner and support the work of the United Nations, particularly in Africa. Efforts to settle disputes and resolve crises must be made in compliance with international norms. Given that the rule of law was a fundamental element of peace and justice, it could not be established if the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and non-use of force were not respected.

104. **Ms. Weiss Ma'udi** (Israel) said that, at the national level, her country's commitment to the rule of law was enshrined in its Declaration of Independence and in its Basic Laws. That legal framework served to ensure that the rights of all citizens were upheld and to facilitate coexistence in a diverse country composed of many different cultural, religious and ethnic groups. The judiciary further ensured equality and democratic rights. The Supreme Court offered broad rules of standing and opened its doors to citizens and non-citizens alike to allow them to pursue justice when there was a concern that basic rights or civil liberties had been infringed upon. The Supreme Court also scrutinized domestic legislation, including counter-terrorism laws, to ensure that basic, constitutional rights were upheld and that the rule of law was respected.

105. Concerted efforts had been made to improve judicial diversity. The President of the Supreme Court and 4 of the 15 Justices of the Supreme Court were women. Over half of judges were women and 8.5 per cent belonged to non-Jewish minority groups. In recent years, three judges of Jewish-Ethiopian descent had been appointed. In addition, the first female qadi, or religious judge, had been appointed to a Muslim sharia court.

106. Israel was committed to safeguarding the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, minority groups and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons; promoting social and economic rights; and combating racism and discrimination. A party to all major human rights treaties, Israel engaged regularly with civil society and held round-table discussions with non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and United Nations entities. Israel also worked to promote human rights at the United Nations.

107. Israel was committed to preventing sexual harassment. In 1998, long before the #MeToo movement, the Government had adopted a progressive and comprehensive law prohibiting sexual harassment, under which a number of senior officials had been prosecuted. Israel had co-founded the Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment and had introduced the first United Nations resolution on the prevention and elimination of sexual harassment in the workplace.

108. At the international level, her Government was working to promote the rule of law through legal capacity-building efforts in the developing world. In 2018, Israel had hosted the first international conference on treaty practice, an event that had inspired further international engagement and cooperation. Israel had played an active role in the anniversary celebrations of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and

looked forward to contributing to similar initiatives in the future and sharing practices and expertise.

109. Her delegation supported the drawing up of a United Nations plan of action to tackle hate speech and the efforts to ensure the safety of religious sanctuaries. She hoped that the informal meeting of the General Assembly on combating antisemitism and other forms of racism and hate, held in June 2019, would lead to real action and outcomes. Her delegation welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General's report also addressed climate change and corruption. Israel would continue to participate fully in international efforts to tackle climate change and had adopted ambitious domestic policies. The United Nations should handle with the utmost seriousness its own ongoing internal investigations of corruption and misconduct.

110. Israel supported the Organization's efforts to end impunity and address deficits in justice and the rule of law, and agreed that the rule of law and criminal accountability were first and foremost the responsibility of individual States. Safeguards must be put in place to prevent unwarranted and harmful politicization. The rules on jurisdiction, both in the context of international treaty practice and in the context of national and international courts and tribunals, served to ensure judicial independence and impartiality, prevent politicization and maintain the legitimacy of the institution concerned. Institutions that ignored those rules and exceeded the bounds of the authority conferred upon them undermined the validity of their own decisions and harmed their credibility and integrity.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*