



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child Seventy-fifth session

### Summary record of the 2207th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 23 May 2017, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Winter

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*Fifth periodic report of Romania*

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports of States parties (continued)**

*Fifth periodic report of Romania (CRC/C/ROU/5; CRC/C/ROU/Q/5 and Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Romania took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Coman** (Romania), introducing her country's report (CRC/C/ROU/5), said that her Government's achievements during the reporting period had included the re-establishment of the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption, in 2014, and the adoption of a new set of strategies for the period up to 2020 aimed, inter alia, at the promotion of the rights of the child, social inclusion and poverty reduction. Legislative and policy measures had been taken to increase access to social services, health care and education, to reduce the disparities between rural and urban areas and to effect a transition from institutional care to community-based services.
3. Romania had recently ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and, in 2016, had become one of the "pathfinder" countries in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. Amendments had been introduced to the laws on community health with a view to improving access to health services for disadvantaged persons, with a focus on the Roma communities. Laws had also been passed to enhance the protection of the rights of children with disabilities, including in the areas of education, vocational training, rehabilitation and social integration. The National Commission for Desegregation and Educational Inclusion had been set up recently to combat discrimination in educational establishments.
4. Despite those achievements, challenges remained. Nearly half of all children in Romania continued to live in poverty. Local authorities' capacity to implement national policies needed to be strengthened, especially in deprived rural areas. Many rural towns and villages lacked full-time social workers. Other challenges that must be overcome included stigma and discrimination against various categories of children, and the general acceptance in society of violence against children.
5. Her Government worked in close partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to raise public awareness of the problems associated with violence against children, including domestic violence, child trafficking and exploitation, child sex tourism and child pornography on the Internet. As a result, the Government's capacity to tackle the problems had been enhanced by an increase in the number of cases reported. Nevertheless, further efforts were required to fill the gaps in knowledge about the rights of the child in both urban and rural areas and to invest in developing the skills of parents and caregivers.
6. Her Government was working with UNICEF and Norway Grants to deliver a minimum package of services to vulnerable and marginalized children in Romania, covering health, education and the protection of children against violence. The services were designed to combat child poverty and social exclusion and promote equal opportunities so that children in deprived areas could realize their full potential later in life.
7. Another important step forward was the ban on the institutionalization of children under 3 years of age. Romania had been among the first countries to respond to the call for deinstitutionalization from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNICEF. The National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption was thus drawing up a plan, based on a study conducted by the World Bank and UNICEF, to close down outdated institutions, develop alternative care for children deprived of their family environment, and provide community-based services, covering approximately 7,000 children.
8. A number of government priorities had been set for the period 2017-2020, such as: the establishment of an ombudsman for children's rights; increased investment in early education, including the setting up of 2,500 new crèches, kindergartens and after-school settings in the country's most deprived areas; the expansion of vocational and technical

education; compulsory medical check-ups for children between the ages of 5 and 9; and enhancement of prenatal and postnatal care services.

9. Partnerships between various institutional actors, stakeholders and beneficiaries, including children, were essential. She acknowledged the contribution made by civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in helping Romania to achieve the standards set out in the Convention. She also wished to highlight the crucial importance of consulting with and involving children in decisions affecting their lives.

10. **Ms. Khazova** (Coordinator, Country Task Force), welcoming the significant efforts made by the State party to bring its laws and regulations into line with the Convention, said that most of the recommendations set forth in the Committee's previous concluding observations concerning implementation of the Convention (CRC/C/ROM/CO/4, paras. 5-8) had yet to be fulfilled. She wished to know what it was doing to improve coordination between the relevant ministries and local authorities in implementing the various laws and strategies in place to promote children's rights. In particular, what role was played by the Coordinating Council for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights and Adoption, referred to in paragraph 1 of the replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/ROU/Q/5/Add.1)?

11. The Committee was concerned that the impact of public spending on resources for children was difficult to assess and that the money was unevenly distributed. For example, high-technology medical care accounted for a substantial share of budgetary resources, while primary health care and preventive medicine remained underfunded. She would like to know, therefore, what the Government planned to do to make resource allocations more transparent and effective.

12. Data collection was another area where there was still room for improvement. It would be useful to learn what steps the State party intended to take to collect more comprehensive data on children, broken down by ethnic background, age, disability status, social position, wealth and other factors. It was not clear whether there was any mechanism to conduct assessments of the effectiveness of laws, policies and strategies for children.

13. She would welcome an update on the status of the ombudsman for children, especially given that the creation of such an institution had been mentioned as a government priority for the period 2017-2020. Did the Government have a timeline for the establishment of an ombudsman's office?

14. Further information on the State party's plans to disseminate the Convention, particularly among children, the Committee's general comments and other relevant materials would be appreciated. She would also be interested to hear more about the extent to which civil society and children had been involved in the drafting of the periodic report.

15. While the minimum legal age for marriage was 18 years for both men and women, in certain circumstances that age could be lowered to 16 provided that parental consent was obtained. Could the delegation clarify whether such consent was sufficient or whether the approval of a competent body was also required? The Committee had received reports of children in poor rural areas entering into de facto unions as early as 13 years of age. She wondered whether the State party ran any campaigns against early marriage.

16. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** (Country Task Force) said that he was pleased to see such a large delegation at the meeting, which showed the importance that the State party attached to the Convention. Referring to the action plan for school desegregation and higher quality education in pre-university educational establishments mentioned in the replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/ROU/Q/5/Add.1, para. 5), he pointed out that discrimination and segregation continued to be a cause for concern. He would welcome information on the outcomes of the action plan. It was not clear whether the plan dealt with the prevention of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons, persons with disabilities and asylum-seeking and refugee children. He would like to know whether any policies were in place to support intersex persons. The Committee had received reports that the LGBT community in schools had been attacked and humiliated. A large proportion of students surveyed had stated that they were bothered by having classmates who fell into those groups. The Committee had also received reports of teachers making homophobic comments. He asked whether there existed any complaints mechanisms for the community

of LGBT students. He would also like to know whether the action plan in question dealt with institutions other than schools.

17. Turning to the issue of the best interests of the child, he said that he would be grateful for further information on the law on the protection and promotion of children's rights, No. 257/2013, referred to in the periodic report (CRC/C/ROU/5, para. 38). Any information on how the principle of the child's best interests was applied by judicial and administrative officials would also be welcome. Were there any plans to promote that principle among parents?

18. Although some progress on reducing the infant mortality rate had been made, it still remained high when compared with other European countries. Further details of the measures to reduce infant mortality would therefore be helpful, particularly with regard to vulnerable groups such as persons living in rural areas.

19. The State party's report mentioned a number of legal provisions concerning respect for the views of the child in matters of education and religion (paras. 47-53). He wished to know whether a child's right to freedom of expression under the law extended to spheres other than education and religion and whether children were heard in all court proceedings on matters affecting them. It would also be interesting to learn whether child-sensitive procedures, such as the use of interview rooms designed for children, were available.

20. **Ms. Otani** (Country Task Force) said that the Committee noted with appreciation the progress made on birth registration procedures in Romania. However, referring to the answer to question 3 in the replies to the list of issues (paras. 14-27), she wondered whether the requirement that a medical examination should be conducted in cases in which no certificate of a live birth had been issued by a physician constituted an impediment to the registration of births of children born at home or in settings other than hospitals. She also asked whether health professionals throughout the country had received training in the new birth registration procedures and whether a system of data collection was in place to carry out an impact assessment of those procedures.

21. She would appreciate further information on the code regulating audiovisual material and the protection of children's privacy, referred to in paragraph 58 of the periodic report. In particular, it was not clear how it protected children above the age of 14. She reiterated the Committee's concern, expressed in paragraph 37 of its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/ROM/CO/4), that children from the age of 14 accused of committing a crime and child victims of physical, psychological or sexual abuse could participate in talk shows or television news programmes provided that certain conditions were met. She wished to know what specific changes had been introduced to the new code in response to the Committee's recommendation that the State party should intensify its efforts to respect the privacy of children in the media, particularly television (para. 38). How did it ensure that children were protected against broadcasts of images or statements that were contrary to the best interests of the child? She would also be grateful if the delegation could provide information on the number of complaints received by the National Audiovisual Council and the procedures for processing them.

22. She would like to know what steps had been taken to educate children on the risks involved in their use of the Internet and to protect them from exposure to harmful information and materials. Drawing attention to the Committee's general comment No. 16 on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights, she asked whether efforts had been made to raise media awareness of the comment.

23. She also drew attention to a Constitutional Court decision that had found the provisions of the national law on education concerning the inclusion of religious courses in the curriculum to be unconstitutional. She wondered whether there were plans to amend the law in the light of the decision. In addition, it was not clear whether students had the right to opt out of religious classes without the written consent of their parents. It would be interesting to know how many students chose not to attend religious classes and how such students were treated.

24. **Ms. Todorova** (Country Task Force), welcoming Romania's progress in protecting children against torture and ill-treatment, including the establishment of a national

preventive mechanism, said that the Committee had received reports of violations of the rights of children held in places of detention, including denial of access to a lawyer at the pretrial investigation stage of proceedings, degrading treatment in public at the time of arrest, and failure to separate minors from adults in police lock-ups. It had also received reports that children in care institutions had been subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment. She therefore wished to know whether the Government had taken steps to ensure that children had access to a lawyer at all stages of criminal proceedings, whether children in detention facilities had access to education and health-care services and whether law enforcement and other officials received training in protecting children against torture and ill-treatment in closed settings. More information on the plans of the national preventive mechanism to inspect settings where children were deprived of liberty, including psychiatric hospitals and special schools for children in conflict with the law, would be appreciated.

25. She also wondered whether any campaigns had been mounted to sensitize parents and others to the negative impact of corporal punishment and to the issue of domestic violence, including violence against children. It would be useful to have an account of existing complaints mechanisms to guarantee children's safety and the extent to which children were aware of and used such mechanisms. Furthermore, she would welcome further details of the steps taken by the Government to tackle the problem of cyberbullying. It would be useful to hear what steps had been taken to address the problem of sexual violence against children in rural areas. It was not clear whether the law concerning domestic violence applied to cases of child abuse. She would also appreciate learning about the outcomes of the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence 2013-2017 as they applied to children in particular.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.30 p.m.*

26. **Ms. Coman** (Romania) said that the Coordinating Council for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights and Adoption was the national body responsible for elaborating policies and strategies and coordinating their implementation at the local and county levels. It sought to make the best use of available resources, avoid duplication of efforts and fill existing gaps. Her delegation would reply to the questions raised about making the budget more transparent and efficient at the next meeting. The formalities for establishing the office of the ombudsman for children, including the adoption of the relevant laws and regulations, and its organizational structure and responsibilities were expected to be finalized in late 2017.

27. **Ms. Preda** (Romania) said that her Government considered the rights of the child to be an important part of children's education. The theme had been incorporated into the school curriculum at the preschool, primary and secondary levels. Teachers received continuous training in children's rights. Furthermore, inspectors monitored schools to ensure that instruction on the rights of the child was duly provided to children.

28. **Ms. Panaitescu** (Romania) said that training sessions at the National Institute of Magistracy fully covered the Convention, in accordance with Law No. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights. Particular attention was focused on the best interests of the child, which was the central principle guiding judges and prosecutors in cases involving children. The protection of the rights of the child was also included in further training courses, which dealt with the exercise of parental authority, listening to the child in court proceedings, adoption and other issues. Mock trials and practical seminars had also been organized on those subjects. In 2015 and 2016, there had been seminars on justice and minority rights, child-friendly justice, work with vulnerable segments of the population, listening to and interacting with young people during judicial proceedings and other subjects. Her delegation would be glad to provide more detailed information on the seminars in writing.

29. She drew attention to a current project to build the capacity of judges and prosecutors under the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme. Seminars had also been held on such matters as divorce, cross-border maintenance obligations, parental responsibilities, child abduction and cross-border succession within the framework of the European Union.

30. **Ms. Cuculas** (Romania) said that the periodic report had been drafted with input from the relevant government ministries and child protection agencies. The National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption had also organized a public hearing attended by the National Student Council, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and children, whose comments and recommendations had been incorporated into the final report submitted to the Committee.

31. **Ms. Coman** (Romania) added that NGOs were also represented on the Coordinating Council for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights and Adoption and, thus, were involved in planning and drafting policies and legislation from the very outset. The Coordinating Council also often consulted with the National Student Council, which was currently working to provide it with recommendations on combating violence and bullying in schools.

32. Law No. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights had been modified to enhance the definition of the best interests of the child and ensure that a comprehensive and consistent approach to that principle was taken by judges and State agencies.

33. **Ms. Panaitescu** (Romania) said that judges were obliged to take into account the views of children aged 10 or more and to give paramount consideration to the best interests of the child when reaching decisions that affected them. Children under 10 years of age could also express their views in accordance with their capacity to do so. In the matter of legal decisions on parental responsibility, it was also mandatory for the child's perspective to be taken into consideration. In that connection, consideration was currently being given to ways of harmonizing different aspects of the law on parental responsibilities. The age of majority was 18, although 16-year-old girls and boys could marry in exceptional circumstances and with the consent of their parents or guardians and the authorization of the courts.

34. **Ms. Coman** (Romania) said that issues relating to discrimination had been taken into account when drafting the National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights 2014-2020, which aimed to increase access to education, health and social services for all children, in rural and urban areas alike, and to ensure high-quality services irrespective of geographical location. In that connection, a package of legislative measures had recently been adopted to ensure the same services for children with disabilities.

35. **Ms. Cuculas** (Romania) said that new anti-discrimination legislation was currently being formulated, together with a comprehensive set of criteria for evaluating children with disabilities, taking into account both social and medical factors.

36. **Ms. Morar** (Romania) said that major progress had been made in terms of protecting minors in detention through the introduction of a package of legislative measures to effectively repeal the obsolete Decree No. 545/1972, as had been recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/ROM/CO/4). As things now stood, minors could only be held in education and detention centres and not in the general prison system. In those centres, they were individually assessed and a personalized intervention plan was drawn up to ensure that they received the educational and psychological support they needed for their eventual reintegration into society; the participation of families and communities in that process was encouraged. Education was compulsory and minors in detention followed the same curricula as was used in the country's ordinary schools. Vocational training and a host of sports and recreation activities, as well as counselling, psychosocial rehabilitation and social assistance, were also available, as were specific courses in fields as varied as human rights education, healthy lifestyles and self-development.

37. Partnerships with NGOs and the sharing of best practices with international partners had enabled the Government to increase the quality and variety of projects and programmes available to minors in the detention system. Investments were also being made to improve staff training to further increase service quality. Regarding complaints, a judicial mechanism had been established to oversee the execution of sentences and ensure that the

rights of minors were respected in education and detention centres. Any breaches of a minor's rights could thus be reported to that mechanism.

38. **Ms. Khazova** said that she wondered whether the coordination capacities of the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption might be better served, and further enhanced, if it was attached to the Prime Minister's Office rather than to the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and the Elderly.

39. She was concerned that children were still not fully aware of their rights under the Convention and asked whether any mandatory children's rights education was provided in schools, including in remote areas. Similarly, she wondered whether all personnel working with children, including social workers and child protection officers, received regular training on children's rights.

40. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** said that he would welcome clarification as to which specific piece of legislation would establish how the best interests of the child were to be applied. In that connection, he wondered what training was provided to the judiciary and other professionals to help them identify the best interests of the child, and how the concept of the best interests of the child was promoted to parents. Similarly, how were the best interests of refugee children taken into account?

41. Regarding discrimination, he would welcome specific information on any policies in place to combat discrimination not only against Roma children but also against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) children, since the Committee had received troubling reports that the latter group in particular was subjected to harsh treatment and social exclusion in schools.

42. **Ms. Todorova** said that she would welcome more information regarding allegations of the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment against child detainees. In particular, she wished to know how many complaints had been received by the complaints mechanism described and how they had been dealt with. She also asked the delegation to explain what was meant by its use of the term "minor".

43. **The Chair** asked whether the education and detention centres were open, semi-open or closed facilities, and what the differences were between detention centres and prisons.

44. **Ms. Coman** (Romania) said that the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption had an important role to play in managing and coordinating policies relating to children's rights. The overall aim was to support and strengthen coordination at the local level and vertically between the local, county and central authorities, as well as with the related ombudsman's office, once that entity had been established.

45. **Ms. Preda** (Romania) said that teaching on children's rights was an important element of children's overall education and every child in Romania learned about such rights from preschool age onwards, irrespective of whether they attended school in rural or urban areas. For the 2017 to 2018 school year, a course on children's rights and critical thinking was also being introduced.

46. **Ms. Cuculas** (Romania) said that the introduction of an expanded definition of the best interests of the child in the legislation had been prompted by the results of a project to strengthen the implementation of the Convention in Romania. The views of a broad range of professionals working in child protection had been taken into account so as to develop a definition that could be used as a guiding principle by all specialists working in that field, including judges.

47. **Ms. Panaitescu** (Romania) said that children whose rights under the legislation, the Convention or other relevant international instrument had been violated could file a complaint through the relevant civil and administrative courts in order to seek redress. Any rights violations that amounted to criminal offences, however, had to be submitted to the criminal courts, which could only be done by persons with full legal capacity, i.e., in most cases, their parents or legal guardians. If necessary, the courts could appoint a legal representative to act on the child's behalf.

48. **Ms. Preda** (Romania) said that pupils in upper secondary education received classes on Internet safety as part of their information and communication technology training. At preschool and primary levels, teachers provided children with a brief introduction to the issue and restricted their access to unsuitable content and websites. Awareness-raising activities and training had also been undertaken for parents. Moreover, as part of a long-standing partnership with Save the Children, an Internet safety guide had been produced for use by all authorities working with children, including teaching staff, child protection staff and school inspectors.

49. **Ms. Coman** (Romania) added that Save the Children also ran the country's Safer Internet Centre, a European Commission initiative, which provided an information and advice helpline for parents and children, and a hotline for members of the public to report child pornography and images of child sexual abuse found online, information that was then passed on to the police for investigation.

50. **Ms. Todorova**, while welcoming the steps taken by the State party to strengthen parental capacities, said that she was nevertheless concerned that a large number of children, often from poverty-stricken backgrounds, continued to be placed in State-run, and often outdated, residential care institutions. In that regard, she wished to know how social assistance programmes, including community services and day-care centres, were monitored and evaluated; what legal framework and quality standards were in place to ensure that social assistance services were provided; and whether the budget for basic preventive services was secured. She wondered about the effectiveness of early identification and intervention processes in respect of families at risk of separation, particularly in urban areas and in cases involving children with disabilities. In that connection, she asked whether there were any workload standards for social workers; to what extent community social services, particularly in rural areas, were staffed with qualified social workers and provided with training and other resources; and what measures the Government intended to take to address the shortage of social workers in Romania.

51. She would also welcome data regarding any cases in which the separation of children with disabilities from their families had been prevented by the local authorities, particularly the multidisciplinary mobile teams operating at the community level. In that connection, while the ban on institutionalizing children under 3 years of age was commendable, she was concerned that exceptions seemed to be made for young children with severe disabilities. With that in mind, she asked how children who were placed in care institutions were monitored, their views taken into consideration and their return to the community managed; what measures were in place to support family contact while the child was in care; and whether there were any specific services aimed at facilitating the social reintegration of children who were due to leave care.

52. She was concerned that, despite the large number of children in care, very few adoptions took place and that the legislation seemed to prioritize the interests of the adoptive parents over those of the child. She also noted that most adoptions concerned children between the ages of 1 and 4. That being the case, she wondered what was the usual time frame for finalization of an adoption; how long it generally took for a child's suitability for adoption to be assessed; who was responsible for matching children with adoptive parents and what criteria they applied; and how the interests of foster carers and prospective parents were balanced.

53. She asked what accommodation was provided for unaccompanied children, especially those applying for asylum; what the time limits were for processing asylum applications; how the guardianship system for unaccompanied children was regulated, who was responsible for assigning a child to a guardian and who could apply to become a guardian; whether specific training on working with migrant and unaccompanied children was provided to border agents, social workers and guardians; and whether there were plans to broaden the assessment criteria used for determining an unaccompanied child's age beyond the medical approach currently employed.

54. Regarding child labour, she was concerned at reports that a high number of children and adolescents had entered the labour market, some of whom were working in hazardous conditions, and wondered what measures the Government was taking to combat the



problem, address the underlying causes and prevent children from engaging in agriculture, construction and street work. Lastly, she asked how the Government ensured that child victims of trafficking for the purposes of sexual or labour exploitation had access to long-term rehabilitation and reintegration services.

55. **Ms. Khazova** said that the reasons behind the situation described in paragraphs 87 to 94 of the State party's report, which referred to Romanian children whose return to Romania had been denied by other European countries, were unclear and she would therefore like more information on the subject. In particular, she wondered who those children were, where their parents were and how they had reached the countries in question.

56. While the State party's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was to be commended, the situation of children with disabilities in Romania remained a major cause for concern. She noted that the National Authority for People with Disabilities did not conduct activities relating to children with disabilities; that there was no comprehensive strategy on children with disabilities or statistical data to monitor and evaluate any progress made; and that children with disabilities accounted for 60 per cent of the children placed in institutions.

57. As far as education was concerned, children with disabilities continued to be taught in segregated, rather than inclusive, settings; however, the process of registering children for those schools was so lengthy and complicated that many parents were instead forced to homeschool their children or place them in institutions. She wished to know what steps were being taken or were envisaged to tackle those issues as well as to improve overall access to education for all children with disabilities, including those living in rural areas where there was a shortage of special education schools and a lack of accessible public transportation. Moreover, she wondered what was being done to address the reportedly high costs incurred by parents who sent their children with disabilities to what were supposed to be non-fee-paying special education schools; and to prevent non-disabled Roma children from being placed in special education schools rather than in mainstream schools. Lastly, she asked what measures had been taken to tackle the serious, and seemingly neglected, problem of street children in Romania.

58. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes**, referring to the area of health, asked what specific measures had been introduced and outcomes obtained as part of the National Health Strategy 2014-2020 and related action plan, in particular to tackle the persistently high rate of infant mortality, the increase in malnutrition among children aged under 5 and the large number of pregnant women not covered by prenatal services. He wondered what impact the introduction of health mediators had had in terms of improving access to health-care services for Roma communities, and what specific tools they had at their disposal for that purpose; and whether any further measures were envisaged.

59. He asked what action had been taken to increase the number of baby-friendly hospitals and of health-care workers trained in the importance of breastfeeding, and to adopt the International Code for Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, as had been recommended by the Committee in paragraph 65 of its previous concluding observations. He also wished to know what steps had been taken and strategies introduced to tackle the high rate of suicide among adolescents; to combat the high teenage pregnancy rate; and to prevent teenagers from taking up smoking, drinking or using drugs. He would welcome more information on the State party's National Strategy on Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health, particularly regarding how it approached the internment of children and adolescents in psychiatric hospitals; what measures were in place to prevent the excessive use of medication; and whether there were any early detection programmes to identify and treat psychological and mental health issues in children and adolescents.

60. Turning to education, he asked whether 6 per cent of the State party's GDP was, in practice, allocated to education; what specific action had been taken to combat discrimination in schools, which disproportionately affected Roma communities; and what policies had been put in place to reverse the high dropout rate among Roma children. Lastly, he wished to know whether human rights education was included in the school curricula at all levels of education.

61. **Ms. Otani** said that she wished to know whether the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2015-2020 included strategies and measures aimed specifically at reducing child poverty and whether it included social inclusion measures targeting children in vulnerable situations, such as Roma children, children with disabilities and children living in rural areas. She noted that it was stated in paragraph 143 of the State party's report that the amount of a means-tested allowance paid to families could be reduced in the light of their children's absences from school. In that connection, she wondered how the situation of children from low-income families, who had difficulties in attending school for reasons linked to poverty, were taken into consideration. Was any extra support provided to such families to help them to send their children to school?

62. Lastly, she asked what impact the 2011 Social Assistance Law had had with regard to child welfare, particularly in view of the reasons cited for the review of the social assistance system, namely cuts in public spending, shortages of specialized staff and negative labour market trends.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*