



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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

### Summary record of the 2772nd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 24 January 2024, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Gudbrandsson (Vice-Chair)

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*Combined third to sixth periodic reports of South Africa*

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*In the absence of Ms. Skelton, Mr. Gudbrandsson (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.*

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

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

*Combined third to sixth periodic reports of South Africa (CRC/C/ZAF/3-6; CRC/C/ZAF/QPR/3-6)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of South Africa joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair**, welcoming the delegation of South Africa to the meeting, explained that one member of the Committee and an additional member of the delegation would be participating via video link.
3. **Ms. Sekewana** (South Africa), introducing her country's combined third to sixth periodic report (CRC/C/ZAF/3-6), said that steps taken by the Government to amend legislation in the domain of children's rights included adopting the Children's Amendment Act of 2022 and introducing the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill. The Government had involved children in the drafting of policies and the design of interventions and had produced child-friendly reports and digital programmes. Despite fiscal constraints, budgetary allocations had been increased in some areas related to upholding children's rights, and financial support had been sought from business, academia and civil society. The Government was implementing a National Side-by-Side Campaign to support caregivers in providing children under the age of 5 with nurturing care. Through the Distinct Development Model, efforts were being made to improve coordination within the Government on a comprehensive plan on children's issues.
4. The Government was taking steps to extend interventions to more remote regions, in order to ensure that no child was left behind, in line with the first of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Such interventions had reached almost 430,000 children between 2022 and 2024. Efforts to address violence against children had been stepped up through 365 Days Child Protection Campaigns. In order to address high levels of substance abuse among both adults and children, an integrated substance abuse programme had been developed that would be conducted throughout South Africa, and a policy on the prevention of and treatment for substance abuse would be presented to Cabinet for approval in 2024.
5. The Government had signed bilateral agreements with Lesotho, Côte d'Ivoire and other countries to share best practice in relation to welfare issues, cross-border movement and other matters related to children, and it had ensured cooperation on such matters with civil society – in which it had made significant investments– and with business and development partners, including the African Union and the United Nations. Following the adoption by Cabinet of the fourth National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC 2019–2024) – which ensured that all spheres of Government were accountable for planning and reporting on their work to progressively realize children's rights in practice – the development of such a plan for the period 2024–2029 had begun.
6. Almost 83 per cent of school leavers had achieved a passing grade in 2023, which represented an increase of 2.8 per cent since 2022. Of the almost 700,000 learners who had sat for the National Senior Certificate examination, almost 550,000 had been grant beneficiaries, and more than 200,000 had achieved entry to institutions of higher education. The Government had committed itself to exempting beneficiaries of social grants from means-testing when they applied for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.
7. The Government would continue to harness its efforts to ensure that it made progress towards the ultimate goal of promoting and protecting children's rights.
8. **Mr. Jaffé** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that he would be grateful to receive an update on the State party's ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. He wished to know when the State party would submit its report under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The delegation might clarify precisely what amendments had been made regarding the Children's Act, comment on the progress of discussions in that connection and explain what the effect of such amendments would be on the National Plan of Action for Children. He wondered whether

the Medium-Term Strategic Framework, if renewed, would include explicit mention of children, and how it would be aligned more precisely with the National Plan of Action for Children.

9. Following the Committee's recommendation in its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/ZAF/CO/2) that the State party should establish a coordinating body for children's rights that enjoyed sufficient authority to perform its role, he wished to know what had been done to increase the influence of the Office on the Rights of the Child. He wondered whether the State party might commit to developing a comprehensive child-responsive budgeting framework across all spheres and departments of Government. He would welcome concrete examples of the success of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy. The delegation might comment on indications that funding to provinces was not distributed in an equitable manner, and that the services available to children varied considerably between them. He wished to know whether Statistics South Africa would in the future provide more comprehensive disaggregated data on all matters related to children.

10. It would be useful to learn more about the State party's overall strategy to disseminate the Convention. He wondered how that strategy related to the Constitution and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and how the State party planned to integrate the Committee's concluding observations into that process. The delegation might elaborate on the statement made in paragraph 61 of the periodic report, that funding to the South African Human Rights Commission might not be sufficient to enable it to carry out all its constitutional obligations. He wondered what action might be taken to implement the best practice exemplified in the work of the Commissioner for Children in Western Cape throughout the country. It would be useful to learn whether any significant initiatives related to child labour – in particular, with respect to the extractive industries – had been introduced following the fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour. He wished to hear more about steps taken to raise public awareness regarding discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children, children with albinism and other groups. Poverty rates – which were very high in South Africa – were more than twice as high among rural children as they were among urban children. The concept of best interests, although enshrined in the Constitution, was reportedly not applied in an equal manner geographically and across sectors with respect to child protection.

11. He wondered whether the State party could provide the Annual Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament programme with additional support and ensure that its resolutions were better communicated and followed up by authorities at all levels. Lastly, he wished to know how the State Party was addressing the underlying causes of the high mortality rates among infants and children under 5 – in particular, malnutrition – and what multisectoral and integrated health, education and economic strategies it planned to implement in order to reduce child mortality and improve developmental outcomes for children.

12. **Ms. Zara** (Country Task Force) said that she would welcome information on strategies established by the State party to systematically identify all undocumented children who had been placed in children's centres, and measures taken to ensure that they obtained birth and nationality certificates. She wished to know what steps the State party was taking to remove obstacles to registering the births of adopted children, migrant children or children born to persons who were not currently in a position to demonstrate that they had South African nationality, and what arrangements it had made to ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. It would be useful to learn what specific measures had been taken to protect private life and the right to one's image; what the results of assessments made in that regard had been; and what additional steps the State party intended to take to ensure that vulnerable and marginalized children were able to access information on a par with other children, including with respect to the media and children's rights.

13. **Mr. Chophel** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to know to what extent corporal punishment was currently being used against children and whether that practice had been affected – particularly in schools and institutions – by recent developments, such as adoption of the National Child Care and Protection Policy in 2019. It would be useful to learn whether children had access to safe and confidential complaints mechanisms; what oversight

and monitoring mechanisms were in place to prevent violence against them; and what training programmes on positive discipline techniques existed for educators and caregivers.

14. Noting the continuing high prevalence of violence against children and the weak implementation of measures taken in response to it, which the Committee had raised as an issue in its previous concluding observations, he would welcome information on how the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide (2020–2030) and other related instruments were being implemented. He wished to know how cases of gender-based violence against children were reported and investigated, and what child-friendly measures had been adopted to prevent revictimization; how perpetrators were prosecuted and sanctioned; what reparations had been provided to victims; and how the State party involved non-governmental stakeholders in the development and implementation of policy.

15. It would be useful to know what was the current scale of sexual exploitation and abuse of children; what action was being taken to address the pressing challenges, and especially the problem of cyberbullying; and how social and gender norms and other factors were being addressed as root causes of those problems.

16. He would welcome information on the current scale of *ukuthwala* (forced child-marriages) and the measures being undertaken to achieve a complete ban on that practice. He wondered how the rights of children who were already married and of children born as a result of child marriages were being protected.

17. Noting that the Committee had expressed concern, in its previous concluding observations, about the harmful practice of intersex genital mutilation, he wished to know what legislative and practical steps the State party had taken to eradicate that practice, as well as the infanticide of intersex children and the bullying of such children in schools; what remedies were available to intersex people who had undergone involuntary, irreversible surgical or other treatment; and whether such remedies were subject to any statute of limitation. Lastly, he wondered whether the State party would, as a matter of urgency, criminalize child participation in animal trophy hunting.

*The meeting was suspended at 3.40 p.m. and resumed at 4 p.m.*

18. **Mr. Nkosi** (South Africa) said that the State party, which was appearing before the Committee for the third time since the democratic breakthrough in South Africa, wished to take the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to meeting its obligations under the Convention.

19. **A representative of South Africa** said that ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure was being considered and a proposal would be submitted to the Cabinet and the Parliament.

20. **A representative of South Africa** said that South Africa had not yet submitted its report on Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict as it was not engaged in active conflict.

21. **Ms. Sekawana** (South Africa) said that, during the process of amending the Children's Act in 2022, there had been a focus on the provisions related to foster care, because there had been serious concerns about the foster care system. The amendments to those provisions had helped to avoid the overburdening of the child protection system: children who were placed with relatives no longer needed to pass through the courts, and they received a top-up grant in addition to the Child Support Grant. One of the amendments covered the establishment of child protection units. Further amendments would be considered once the new administration had come into power. The National Plans of Action for Children were in line with the amended Children's Act.

22. **A representative of South Africa** said that efforts had been made to align the targets and definition of the terms used in the National Plan of Action for Children with those in the Medium-Term Strategic Framework. There was a requirement for an annual progress report to be published in relation to those targets, and steps had been taken to improve reporting. Plans were in place to collect information in relation to the Medium-Term Strategic Framework disaggregated by age.

23. **Ms. Sekawana** (South Africa) said that responsibility for the coordination of child protection measures was being transferred from the Department of Social Development to the Presidency. Efforts were being made to ensure that the necessary human and financial resources were in place to support that transfer of responsibility.
24. **A representative of South Africa** said that work had been undertaken with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to establish a comprehensive and child-responsive budget for social issues. Further efforts were needed in order to involve other sectors, and work was under way to expand child-responsive budgeting.
25. **Ms. Sekawana** (South Africa) said that there were disparities in funding between provinces,. A strategy had been developed to resolve those disparities, and guidelines on equitable funding were being developed that would be used to request funding from the National Treasury.
26. **A representative of South Africa** said that disaggregated data were collected for most of the key surveys undertaken but gaps remained, including in relation to the labour force and budgeting. Statistics South Africa was committed to improving the availability of disaggregated information, especially with regard to disability.
27. While South Africa had limited resources, funds had been earmarked for the institutions established under chapter 9 of the Constitution. If more resources became available, additional funding would be considered for the South African Human Rights Commission.
28. **A representative of South Africa**, responding to the question raised concerning child labour, said that South Africa was working to close the gaps identified with respect to child protection, poverty and access to constitutional rights. The amendments to the Children's Act were intended to ensure compliance with constitutional obligations.
29. **Ms. Sekawana** (South Africa) said that different strategies were being explored to empower children to participate in relation to the issues that affected them and to enable the relevant stakeholders to support that participation. An integrated communication strategy was being developed to that end. Information was disseminated through workshops, on social media and through measures that targeted children in their communities.
30. **A representative of South Africa** said that the fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour had resulted in adoption of the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour. Following the Conference, access to the Child Support Grant had been extended, on the understanding that financial support would enable children to continue their education. Measures to improve school attendance had also been enhanced. One of the key lessons learned from the Conference had been the importance of children's participation, which had led to children being invited to give input at the Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide.
31. Following sporadic xenophobic attacks, campaigns had been launched to encourage social cohesion among children and prevent discrimination against migrant children.
32. In line with a White Paper on educational inclusion, measures were taken to enrol children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Only children with severe disabilities would be directed to specialized schools. Menstrual hygiene products were distributed to girls, to ensure that they could continue to attend school while menstruating.
33. **A representative of South Africa** said that the importance that South Africa attached to the best interests of the child was reflected in government programmes. Police officers specialized in family violence dealt with child protection issues, with a view to ensuring that the principle of the best interests of the child was upheld and obtaining convictions. Capacity-building activities had been undertaken throughout the country. Awareness-raising campaigns were carried out on an ongoing basis, and children were reporting abuse more frequently. A national protocol on the prevention and management of neglect and abuse had been implemented. When children made recommendations through programmes for their participation, action was taken as a matter of urgency. Work had been undertaken with the Albinism Society of South Africa and traditional leaders to dispel some of the myths

surrounding that condition. A range of measures and programmes included families and ensured their access to essential services.

34. An intersectoral programme to combat violence against children was being implemented, and instances of abuse and neglect were recorded on the National Child Protection Register, which was used to screen all persons who worked with children.

35. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Customary Initiation Act and regulations and guidelines on the management of initiation schools had been adopted with a view to addressing harmful practices. Specialized teams had been appointed in the affected provinces, and the schools received support from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the Department of Health. The boys involved were monitored to detect illegal practices, and awareness-raising campaigns were conducted for all those involved. The campaigns were supported by the National Initiation Oversight Committee.

36. South Africa condemned the practice of *ukuthwala*, and cases were reported and prosecuted as abduction; in one case, a man had been sentenced to 22 years' imprisonment. Behavioural change programmes were implemented targeting girls, parents, traditional leaders and broader communities. Draft legislation had been developed that addressed the issue of child marriage.

37. **A representative of South Africa** said that students' Life Orientation courses included age-appropriate lessons on sexual orientation and sexual education from grades 1 to 12. Together with civil society organizations, a cluster of government departments working on social issues had led a national campaign to counter bullying. Volunteers helped schools to raise children's, parents' and educators' awareness of how to report and prevent bullying and provided support to children who were victims of bullying. Television programmes that educated the public about bullying had been broadcast on various channels throughout the country for several years. The Department of Education had drafted guidelines on cyberbullying; children could call a toll-free telephone number to report cases of such bullying; and activities were organized in schools to raise awareness of what constituted cyberbullying and what its legal consequences were.

38. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Child Participation Framework was being implemented. The Government had organized a special workshop to consult children on amendments to the Children's Act. Children could raise issues that affected them through the Annual Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament. A leadership programme had recently been held for child ambassadors.

39. **A representative of South Africa** said that data from Statistics South Africa showed that the infant and under-5 mortality rates had decreased from 25.1 and 33.1 per thousand live births, respectively, in 2021 to 24.3 and 30.7 per thousand live births in 2022. The inpatient case fatality rate for severe acute malnutrition had decreased from 12 per cent to 7 per cent between 2013 and 2022. Various interventions were addressing the rise of overweight and obesity, as well as promoting healthy diets. The rate of exclusive breastfeeding had increased from 7 per cent to 32 per cent between 1998 and 2016 and then risen further by 2022. The Government participated in the baby-friendly hospital initiative and, through the MomConnect programme, encouraged women to make use of available antenatal and postnatal services, including those related to breastfeeding. The Side-by-Side campaign made information about breastfeeding, nutrition, immunization and other aspects of early childhood development available to mothers and caregivers in their native language through a dedicated Facebook page.

40. In order to tackle poverty, means-tested social grant programmes providing cash transfers to families had been expanded. One grant programme was available for up to six months; others were available for longer periods. Nutritious packed meals were distributed to families and young children throughout the country, with a special focus on provinces that were poverty hotspots.

41. **Ms. Sekwana** (South Africa) said that, under the Risiha programme, nutrition services and education support were provided to children through more than 1,000 drop-in centres located in the country's nine provinces. The programme also addressed issues related

to reproductive health and childcare and had reached more than 1 million children over the previous five years.

42. **A representative of South Africa** said that no decision had been taken regarding accession to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. With a view to overhauling the immigration system, the Government had drafted a White Paper on citizenship, immigration and refugee protection. The White Paper would be open for public comment until 31 January 2024, after which time it would be reworked, sent to the Cabinet for approval and then submitted to Parliament. The period of public consultation under the parliamentary process was expected to last from April 2024 to March 2025.

43. **Ms. Sekawana** (South Africa) said that the Government used social media to disseminate information to children on issues that affected them.

44. **A representative of South Africa** said that the use of corporal punishment in schools had been prohibited in 1994 and other mechanisms had been put in place for disciplining children. Educators using corporal punishment would be held legally liable.

45. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Government had recently issued a circular to remind provincial and district authorities, schools and teachers' unions of the prohibition on corporal punishment in schools and to encourage them to contribute meaningfully to eradication of the practice. A manual on positive discipline being prepared by the Government was expected to be published in June 2024. The Government had provided training on alternatives to corporal punishment for 1,441 schools in 2023. The Department of Basic Education worked with the South African Police Services and other government departments to address issues such as gender-based violence and substance abuse.

46. **A representative of South Africa** said that all cases of abuse, neglect and exploitation were recorded in the National Child Protection Register. The Government sought to increase reporting through awareness-raising in schools. The South African Police Services and the judiciary had made strides in ensuring the arrest and conviction of perpetrators, and child-friendly courtrooms had been introduced.

47. **Ms. Sekawana** (South Africa) said that the Government regularly engaged with families and communities to raise awareness of and prevent sexual exploitation. The issue of child protection was everybody's business.

48. **A representative of South Africa**, speaking via video link, said that recent amendments to the Domestic Violence Act had recognized exposure of children to domestic violence as a type of abuse, giving children *locus standi* to apply for protection orders against any persons who subjected them to domestic violence. The amended Act required all adults in the country to report any known or suspected cases of a child being exposed to domestic violence to the police and social workers and made the failure to do so an offence. Under the amended Act, if certain professionals had such suspicions, they must conduct a risk assessment and collect information about the child. Furthermore, the amended Act allowed persons with a material interest in the well-being of a child who was being subjected to domestic violence, including neighbours, teachers, doctors and relatives, to apply for a protection order on his or her behalf. Applications for protection orders could be made online.

49. Sexual intimidation had been included in the legislation on sex crimes against children, and the provisions related to incest had been strengthened. The sexual offences courts provided a range of age-sensitive services for children. Children appearing before such courts had access to the services of an intermediary, a private testifying room and a private waiting room with a play area. Recent amendments to another law had increased the penalties for offences committed against children; courts could, for example, impose life sentences in cases involving the murder or rape of a child. The use of sign language in courts had been expressly recognized, and hard-of-hearing children unable to use sign language could testify by means of demonstrations.

50. **A representative of South Africa** said that a plethora of laws were in place to combat corruption, including the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act, the Prevention of Organised Crime Act, the Protected Disclosures Act, the Financial Intelligence Centre Act, the Protection of Constitutional Democracy Against Terrorist and Related Activities Act and

the Competition Act. The Government had also developed a fraud prevention plan that included a whistle-blowing policy, conducted training on ethics, and maintained hotlines that could be used by the public or government employees to report suspected cases of fraud and corruption.

51. **Mr. Chophel** said that he welcomed the Government's condemnation of *ukuthwala*, but more efforts were needed to counter the practice, as it appeared to be driving the high rate of child marriage in the State party. He wished to know whether any child-friendly, confidential complaint mechanisms were in place that tied in to the National Child Protection Register. He would be grateful for information on protections for intersex children and efforts to prevent the exposure of children to violence in the family or cruelty to animals. He wondered whether the Government would consider criminalizing trophy hunting. Information on measures to protect children with albinism would also be appreciated.

52. **Mr. Jaffé** said that he wished to know how long the process of acceding to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure was expected to last, and whether information on child rights was disseminated using South African Sign Language, the State party's newest official language. Given the difficult fiscal context noted by the delegation, he wondered whether steps would be taken to prioritize funding for children's programmes. He would appreciate information on efforts to combat discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children. It would be helpful to know whether children's commissioners could be introduced in all the provinces; what steps were being taken to change parents' and community members' attitudes towards corporal punishment; how successful the State party's efforts to stop sexual abuse in schools had been; and how many teachers had been dismissed in connection with cases of such abuse.

53. **Ms. Otani** said that, while South Africa, like many other States party to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, was not in a state of conflict, it would send a strong message if the country submitted its initial report under that Optional Protocol. The report might cover information concerning international cooperation to support the recovery and reintegration of children who were victims of armed conflict, as well as information showing that there was no recruitment or use of children under the age of 18 in the country's armed forces.

54. **Ms. Zara** said that she would be grateful to receive information on policies and programmes to facilitate the registration of births without discrimination and on the outcomes of any evaluations of those initiatives. In the light of the National Digital & Future Skills Strategy, she would also like to know how the Government was ensuring that children without Internet access and those unable to read or write were proactively informed about policies, plans, programmes and achievements.

55. **Ms. Correa** said that she wondered whether there were any clear statistics on the practice of kidnapping girls.

56. **Mr. Jaffé** said that he would like to know how many children were living outside their family environment, including in child and youth care centres, so-called secure care facilities, kinship arrangements and foster arrangements, and to have an estimate of the number of children in unregulated or unlicensed facilities. He wondered if there were any plans to conduct research in order to gain a more accurate understanding of where children were being cared for. It was worrying that facilities for the care of fewer than five children did not seem to be regulated or licensed, as the children within them might be vulnerable and unaccounted for. Given reports of systemic failures in the care system, it would be helpful to hear how the authorities were enforcing traceability of children, quality standards and proper case management. The delegation might also comment on any plans to promote deinstitutionalization and prioritize ending care placements for children under 3. It would be helpful to receive figures on the reporting of cases of physical and sexual abuse in the care system and an explanation of complaint mechanisms.

57. He would also appreciate it if the delegation could shed light on the fall in the number of adoptions since the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and on shifting interests in relation to domestic and intercountry adoption. The Committee would be interested to hear what regulations were in place to deal with the children of incarcerated parents, including



those who remained with their parents in places of detention and older children with one incarcerated parent.

58. The delegation might also provide an update on data collection in relation to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; on the operationalization of the National Child Protection Register and the data collection system on trafficking in persons; and on how those mechanisms were integrated. It would also be helpful to understand what training was being delivered for professionals working with or for children concerned by the Optional Protocol. Lastly, he would be grateful for an update on the authorities' progress in implementing the recommendations made by the South African Law Reform Commission in 2022 concerning the comprehensive criminalization of all forms of sale and sexual exploitation of children as defined in the Optional Protocol.

59. **Mr. Chopel** said that he would like to hear about measures taken to address the absence of a comprehensive law and policy for realization of the rights of children with disabilities, and the fact that children with disabilities faced unequal access to services as well as marginalization, exclusion and alienation. He would be grateful if the delegation could provide an update on Education White Paper 6 on inclusive education. The delegation might also elaborate on the steps taken to investigate and sanction all reports of abuse and neglect of children with disabilities in all settings, and on the investments made in financial and technical resources in that regard. He would also like to hear more about support for families and parents of children with disabilities and community-based care.

60. **Ms. Zara** said that the Committee would be interested to hear about the efforts made to reduce inequalities in health care provision while improving access to primary public health care services. Information on measures to improve the quality of health care services, by providing sufficient human, technical and financial resources and building professional capacity, and to ensure the full immunization of all children would also be appreciated. It would be helpful to understand what strategies existed to prevent malnutrition, stunting and obesity in children. She would also like to hear about the strategies in place for a national programme to raise awareness among parents and primary carers about healthy nutrition from birth.

61. She wondered what measures the Government had taken to increase the number of establishments offering mental health services to children and adolescents and to integrate mental health services into primary health care and schools. She would appreciate information on the strategies taken to eliminate disparities in the distribution of mental health services for children and adolescents in rural and urban areas. It would be helpful to know whether there were any plans to adopt a strategy, with an earmarked budget, for stepping up specialized training for child psychiatrists, child psychiatry nurses, psychologists and social workers to deliver mental health services.

62. She would like to hear about steps to draw up new guidelines to ensure access to age-appropriate reproductive services and free access to safe abortion and post-abortion care for girls. It would be helpful to hear how the authorities were ensuring that all girls and boys, including those out of school and in rural areas, could access confidential and child-friendly information and services related to family planning, sexual and reproductive health, the provision of contraceptives and abortion. The delegation might also comment on measures taken by the Government to tackle drug abuse among children and young people, including through the provision of accurate and objective information and education.

63. The Committee would be grateful to receive information on measures to increase the proportion of children benefiting from antiretroviral treatment; to increase access to diagnosis, screening and treatment services for children infected with HIV; to reduce the risk of infection among girls and young women; to reduce the prevalence of HIV among adolescents; and to finalize and implement the national plan as part of the Global Alliance for Ending AIDS in Children by 2030.

64. She wondered how the government planned to ensure the visibility of children in climate, energy and environment education programmes. Lastly, she would appreciate information on Government measures to enable entitled mothers to have access to financial support from the first day of the child's life, as well as to increase the number of children

under 1 eligible for the Child Support Grant and ensure they received that support during the first month following their birth.

65. **Ms. Marshall-Harris**, speaking via video link, said that while the near universal school enrolment of children aged 3–6 and 7–15 was commendable, the Committee would like to hear about actions the authorities could take to tackle the high dropout rate among learners over 15. She wondered how the strategy on learner pregnancy was developing and how much more might be done on that issue. She was curious as to whether South Africa still aimed to meet its ambitions set out under its 2013 Regulations relating to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure. She wondered whether it had made progress in removing mud schools and schools made of asbestos, and what its envisaged timescales were for doing so. It would be helpful to know whether the authorities were pursuing and planned to bring to justice the perpetrators of corruption and mismanagement, which were hampering the rate of infrastructure development. She wondered if the National School Nutrition Programme was reaching the most vulnerable children and whether it might also be plagued by mismanagement and corruption, leading to non-delivery for the poorest children. The national curriculum needed to be brought in line with children's current needs, especially in the areas of digital space and Internet provision. It would be helpful to know whether international human rights featured on the curriculum, as their inclusion might help reduce discrimination, hate speech and harassment in schools. The delegation might also comment on the donations required in non-fee-paying schools, given that few parents could afford them. She was curious as to whether the Government had plans to renew any of its existing education strategies, many of which were due to conclude in 2024.

66. She asked whether the country's strategy to prioritize school transport for children with disabilities was effective and why so many were left behind owing to a lack of transport. It would be helpful to know whether any strategies could be implemented to address girls' fear of assault on the way to school. She also wished to know whether the authorities were working to address the very long waiting lists for children with disabilities to be placed in a school or institution. Information on the access of asylum-seeking children to education, particularly for those who were undocumented, would be appreciated.

67. She wondered whether there was a possibility that the age of criminal responsibility might be raised further, to 14.

68. It appeared that children in street situations were not getting the necessary help from social workers and the Department of Social Development for family integration, family tracing and removal from street situations. She wondered whether enough attention was paid to the situation of abandoned refugee or migrant children. She also wished to know what could be done for children in street situations who experienced frequent harassment, exploitation and violence.

69. She wondered whether children belonging to the Khoi-San people were recognized as such, whether their culture and their language were being used and respected, and whether the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act facilitated the involvement of those children.

70. Lastly, she would like to know whether paternity and maintenance support claims in connection with sexual exploitation and abuse by South African personnel had been investigated, and what measures the authorities were developing to prevent abuse by personnel in the field.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*