



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 2773rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 25 January 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Gudbrandsson (Vice-Chair)

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

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Combined third to sixth periodic reports of South Africa (continued)
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1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of South Africa joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of South Africa** said that figures for child marriages had risen from over 200 per year between 2006 and 2021 to nearly 400 from April 2022 to March 2023 and almost 300 from April to December 2023.
3. **A representative of South Africa** said that child-friendly confidential complaint mechanisms were available through the children’s hotline, managed in partnership with civil society, as well as at the Gender-Based Violence Command Centre and the one-stop Thuthuzela Care Centres. Those services ensured that children would report cases of abuse to the National Child Protection Register within the prescribed time frame.
4. The Government was committed to discussing possible solutions to ending trophy hunting with its relevant departments.
5. **A representative of South Africa** said that information had been disseminated to children by sign language even before the language had become a national one, a practice encouraged by the country’s growing number of schools for deaf children. The Pan South African Sign Language Board was planning to finalize the standardization of signs related to child rights, after which videos would be posted online to convey that information in sign language to the public.
6. **A representative of South Africa** said that, according to the South African Constitution, all citizens had the same rights, regardless of their sexual orientation. The Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill, which was awaiting approval in Parliament, included provisions to protect the rights of children belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community. In addition, the Civil Union Act of 2016 and the new Marriage Bill allowed same-sex marriage. The Government had established national and provincial task teams to ensure that members of that community were represented in decision-making processes for services relevant to them. Civil society organizations serving the LGBTIQ+ community had been given additional funding through the recovery of criminal assets. Acceptance of that community was encouraged through discussions in schools and churches, and the Government continued to build the capacity of officials, including educators, to handle related topics.
7. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Government, acknowledging the Committee’s recommendation to provide children’s commissioners in every province and understanding that it would promote the rights of children, was striving to apply uniformity and best practice across the country.
8. **A representative of South Africa** said that any corporal punishment inflicted on a child must be reported. The Children’s Third Amendment Bill, released by the Department of Social Development in 2018, sought to remove the common law defence of “reasonable chastisement” and to explicitly outlaw corporal punishment in homes. The Government ran advocacy campaigns against such punishment, which targeted schools, parents and communities. In Life Orientation classes at school, children learned about the mechanisms for reporting corporal punishment.
9. **A representative of South Africa** said that, over the previous three years, approximately 245 educators had been dismissed from their posts for having committed sexual offences against children. That figure had been declining annually, owing to prosecutions and advocacy work to educate parents and children on such abuses and how to report them. Doctors, nurses and educators had a duty to report any abuse, including suspected abuse, against children.

10. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Government would examine reports submitted by other countries on the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, in order to determine what to mention in its own initial report.

11. **A representative of South Africa** said that an amendment to the law had made birth registration compulsory within 30 days of a child being born. An awareness-raising campaign led by the Minister of Home Affairs had made use of community radio stations, which were popular in rural areas. Birth registration offices were in operation throughout the country, and more than 100 mobile offices issued birth certificates in rural areas. Nearly 60 per cent of registrations took place in health facilities. It was planned to establish a further 100 mobile offices and nearly 100 health facilities by the end of the 2023/2024 financial year. The country's birth registration programmes had been evaluated by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in 2016.

12. **A representative of South Africa** said that a hybrid approach involving electronic and other forms of communication was being used to disseminate information to children on their rights. To that end, it was planned to make increased use of pamphlets, municipality-level community meetings, local information desks, community outreach and information packs, including in Braille.

13. The Risiha programme sought to promote increased access to education by fostering the resilience of children from disadvantaged communities.

14. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Department of Basic Education had implemented a framework to ensure that education policy took account of the effect of the changing nature of digital technologies on teaching and learning. The framework set out a comprehensive guideline for using digital resources, to ensure that all learners were achieving the curriculum goals and that new teachers were competent in using such resources.

15. **A representative of South Africa** said that there were no clear data on the practice of *ukuthwala*. Since its perpetrators were charged with abduction and rape, all child abduction cases would need to be sifted through, in order to find those with the motive of *ukuthwala*.

16. **A representative of South Africa** said that over 200,000 children were currently living in foster care, over 18,000 children were living in more than 400 child and youth care centres, and approximately 60,000 children were accessing supplements to their child support grants.

17. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Government followed protocol when tracing the parents of children admitted to child and youth care centres. In the case of unaccompanied minors, the Government cooperated with neighbouring countries. If family reunification was delayed, the child would remain in the centre and receive additional support, with the social worker assigned to the case using any information already available to help trace the parents.

18. **A representative of South Africa** said that, in order to address the systematic failures in child and youth care centres, the Government would commit to ensuring that the admission procedures and guidelines for those facilities, as prescribed in the Children's Act, were complied with.

19. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Children's Act contained no provisions for the regulation of facilities caring for fewer than five children.

20. **Ms. Sekawana** said that, having identified a gap in that regard, the Government would discuss how children could be protected from abuse in such facilities.

21. **A representative of South Africa** said that guidelines were in place for those working in child and youth care centres to ensure that all cases of abuse were reported within the stated time frame and using the designated form. All such cases must be recorded in the register provided in every centre and reported to the head of the department. Those facilities' care workers, management boards and children were educated on the relevant prevention and intervention programmes.

22. **Ms. Sekawana** said that institutionalized care was one option provided for in the Children's Act. The Government prioritized family reunification over intercountry adoption.

If children could not remain with their families, foster care within the community or national adoption were considered next, to allow the children to remain in South Africa. Intercountry adoption was only considered once all other avenues had been exhausted. National adoption figures had increased because of increased awareness among communities, leading to a decrease in intercountry adoption.

23. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Imbeleko project, designed to promote the health and psychosocial well-being of incarcerated mothers, was already being implemented. Children were permitted to stay with their parents in correctional facilities until the age of 2. Stakeholders such as the Department of Health and Department of Basic Education worked in close coordination to provide services, including health care, to children in correctional facilities, and steps were being taken to establish early childhood development and other education services at correctional facilities across the country. The Government, together with designated organizations, was responsible for placing children leaving correctional facilities with foster or adoptive families or in alternative care arrangements in the community. The child's relatives or prospective parents, where applicable, were involved throughout that process.

24. Older children with incarcerated parents received support from the Department of Social Development on the basis of a needs assessment. If the incarcerated parent had been the breadwinner of the family, the child would receive social welfare payments and could be asked to provide a statement to support an application for a child support grant. Younger children could be temporarily placed under the care of older siblings or other family members. Volunteers were on hand to help children of incarcerated parents, including by ensuring that they continued to attend school.

25. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Government remained committed to protecting the rights of children with special educational needs, and all policies were inclusive of children with disabilities. The Department of Basic Education promoted inclusive education and paid special attention to children facing barriers to learning, including by responding to reports of abuse of children with special educational needs. A number of strategies had been implemented to ensure that the basic health care, educational and housing needs of children with severe behavioural disorders were being met.

26. **A representative of South Africa** said that the National Child Protection Register had been developed to enable all designated child protection organizations in the country to collect comprehensive data in the areas covered by the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Government had developed templates for the collection of disaggregated data in relation to the issues addressed in the Optional Protocol, as well as on trafficking in children and the smuggling of migrants. As a consequence, it was able to confirm figures concerning trafficking, including the number of victims identified, the number of victims receiving Government support, the number of convictions handed down and the number of cases pending in the criminal justice system.

27. **A representative of South Africa** said that a review of the White Paper on inclusive education had been made in January 2023. The initial period envisaged for completion of implementation of the White Paper had been 24 months. The Government strove to ensure that children with intellectual disabilities had fair and equal access to education. Teachers at 447 schools had received specialist training to support the implementation of a new kind of curriculum designed to provide children with disabilities with a customized learning programme. In addition, South African sign language had recently been introduced as a school subject. In 2022, 137,000 teachers and 121,000 students had received training on inclusion of children with disabilities, an increase compared with 2002, when only 64,000 teachers and 77,000 students had received such training. A total of 435 schools had been audited, 500 schools had been designated full-service schools and 848 schools were ready to be transformed into resource centres for children with special educational needs.

28. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Government was developing a universal health coverage system. Among the measures taken to make health care more affordable had been the creation of public-private partnerships, which, when well coordinated and well structured, had yielded positive outcomes for local communities. Inequalities in access to health care were also addressed through initiatives such as mobile clinics running

on the rail and road networks, which brought health care services to rural communities with limited health infrastructure.

29. There was substantial political will to foster multisectoral cooperation among Government departments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to address malnutrition, food insecurity and hunger. The Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Obesity in South Africa 2023–2028 had been developed to reduce the prevalence of obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases and had built on the success of a levy on sugar-sweetened beverages. A key element of that strategy was the dissemination of evidence-based information on nutrition to parents.

30. **A representative of South Africa** said that, to improve mental health care in schools, the Department of Basic Education provided training in psychosocial support to auxiliary school staff, enabling them to help children experiencing everyday mental health issues and problems with substance abuse. Some 750 students had benefited from the programme to date, and the Government's aim was to deliver training to 4,800 educators across all provinces between February and September 2024.

31. **A representative of South Africa** said that over 100 public education campaigns addressing drug abuse and substance abuse had been conducted in 2022 and 2023, reaching nearly 55,000 schoolchildren. Forty-two campaigns had been carried out between April and September 2023, reaching around 10,500 people. Girls not attending school were targeted through the Ezabasha programme, an initiative aimed at promoting dialogue among girls to raise awareness of their sexual and reproductive health and rights and to deliver information on, inter alia, access to contraception and treatment centres.

32. **Ms. Sekawana** (South Africa) said that the aim of many of the programmes mentioned was to address various social ills by empowering young people to make informed, positive life choices and by strengthening families, so that young people were instilled with good morals, standards and values at an early age. The purpose of that cross-cutting approach was to raise responsible young people who were resilient to modern societal challenges.

33. **A representative of South Africa** said that, following the approval of new guidelines, all infants with HIV aged under 24 months were required to begin treatment with antiretroviral therapy. The clinical and immunological profiles of children aged over 24 months were taken into account in decisions on their treatment. The National Youth HIV Prevention Strategy 2022–2025 provided for the implementation of campaigns aimed at promoting behavioural change among young people, targeting in particular those children most at risk of HIV infection. It also envisaged a range of measures to strengthen coordination, governance and monitoring of the impact of those campaigns in HIV hotspots. A child-friendly version of the strategy was available.

34. The Disaster Management Act, 2002, contained provisions on evacuating children in the event of climate-related natural disasters, stating that children would not be separated from their parents, could continue to attend school if it was safe to do so and would be provided with food. To build long-term climate resilience, the Government was conducting a school outreach programme to raise awareness of climate change among children, as well as leveraging adaptation finance to support policies and programmes aimed at building adaptive capacity within communities.

35. **A representative of South Africa** said that a number of measures had been introduced to reduce the school dropout rate. Initiatives such as the no-fee schools policy and the National School Nutrition Programme, implemented in both primary and secondary schools, had been designed to help poorer children to attend school. The Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support had been introduced to allow the early identification of, and provision of support to, children facing barriers to learning. The South African School Act envisaged opportunities for parents and guardians to participate in school governance, encouraging greater parental involvement in their children's education. Lastly, early childhood development programmes had been brought under the responsibility of the Department of Basic Education, creating better foundations for children's learning and thereby increasing the likelihood of their completing their education.

36. **A representative of South Africa** said that, through the National School Nutrition Programme, all children at primary and secondary schools in poorer and food-insecure areas were provided with one nutritionally balanced meal per day and were taught how to maintain healthy eating and lifestyle habits. Children were permitted to take home any leftover food to prevent wastage. In addition, schools were encouraged to establish food gardens so that they could grow fresh produce for school meals and children, parents and teachers could learn how to grow their own food. Funds allocated through the Programme could be used only to purchase ingredients and equipment for cooking, essential materials such as first aid kits and cleaning products, and gardening equipment for schools with food gardens. Misuse or mismanagement of those funds could be reported anonymously through a free hotline.

37. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Government had strengthened its anti-corruption system by requiring senior, middle and junior managers to disclose their financial interests and by checking for mismatches between their income and living standards that could signal corruption. Civil servants involved in public sector procurement were vetted and must disclose their financial interests, to ensure that potential conflicts of interest could be detected. All entities providing services to the Government must register with a central supplier database, through which it was possible to check whether they had close familial links to civil servants.

38. The Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act, which required people in positions of authority to report corruption, had not been successful in achieving its aims. The Government had therefore amended the Public Audit Act to empower the Auditor-General to refer material irregularities to the law enforcement or intelligence agencies, to take binding remedial action and to issue certificates of debt in the event of financial loss, thereby transferring liability to the guilty party.

39. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Country Task Force), speaking via video link, said that she wished to know what steps would be taken to bring child and youth care centres (secure care centres for juvenile offenders) into line with the Convention and general comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system. She would appreciate some indication of when the Government intended to examine the possibility of making provision for early release and ensuring proper rehabilitation. She asked whether child labour was adequately monitored, whether persons who employed children were prosecuted, and whether a national action plan to eliminate child labour would be in place by 2030. She would be grateful if the delegation could supply some information on investment in early childhood education to improve children's numeracy and literacy, as well as nursery school staff's qualifications, and on funding to ensure that early learning and development agencies were properly registered.

40. **Mr. Jaffé** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that he would like to know what efforts were being made to boost the number of child psychiatrists and other mental health specialists.

41. **Mr. Van Keirsbilck** said that he wished to know what steps were being taken to end solitary confinement and strip searching in secure care centres and to follow up the other excellent recommendations that had been made in a recent report of the South African Human Rights Commission and the Centre for Child Law. He also wished to know whether any complaint mechanism had been put in place for children who had been deprived of liberty and whether it was efficient. He wondered whether the groundbreaking decision of a South African judge, that a criminal court had to take into account the fact that an accused person had children, was also borne in mind in other settings. He would appreciate information on measures to establish the paternity of children of South African peacekeeping personnel and to protect the victims of sexual abuse by those peacekeepers.

42. **Ms. Aho** said that she would appreciate a description of steps taken to remove the legal obstacles to obtaining a birth certificate for a child whose father was South African and whose mother was a foreigner, and to abolish the requirement that a DNA test must be conducted when registering the birth of that child. She wished to know what results had been achieved by measures to combat sexual abuse in schools. She wondered what action was taken when sexual abuse occurred in the family and in the community. She would be grateful for information about steps to prevent adolescent tuberculosis. She asked whether any

measures were in place to protect children against sharp marketing practices in the food industry. She would like the delegation to provide more information on what was really being done to combat HIV/AIDS. Lastly, she was curious to know whether children were still taught in Afrikaans and whether 16 June, the International Day of the African Child, was still celebrated in South Africa.

43. **Ms. Zara** (Country Task Force) said that the Committee wished to learn of any plans or programmes that had been implemented to improve access to adequate basic sanitation and safe water in rural areas and poorly served urban areas and would like to know what penalties were imposed on companies that polluted the environment.

44. **Mr. Chophel** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to know whether female genital mutilation was practised in South Africa.

45. **Ms. Kiladze** said that she would like the delegation to explain how case management was coordinated between municipalities and State agencies and to indicate whether it worked in practice.

46. **Ms. Beloff** said that she would be grateful for clarification of steps taken by the State party to reconcile traditional practices and customs with international standards.

The meeting was suspended at 11.40 and resumed at noon.

47. **A representative of South Africa** said that the government authorities worked with the Albinism Society of South Africa, non-governmental organizations and traditional healers to run awareness programmes to dispel the many myths surrounding albinism. Children with albinism and their parents were given security advice as part of those campaigns.

48. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Government took its obligations under United Nations conventions seriously and ensured that all children in the country had access to a full range of services appropriate to their individual needs.

49. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act had been passed in 2019 to give effect to the protection of the traditional languages and culture of Indigenous and minority groups afforded by the Constitution. The Act provided for the statutory recognition of Khoi-San leaders and communities. Some provinces had started to implement the Act through their Houses of Traditional Leaders. Although the Department of Sport, Art and Culture, in partnership with the Department of Basic Education and the Pan South African Language Board, was making progress in promoting and preserving the Khoi-San languages and cultural heritage, more still needed to be done.

50. **A representative of South Africa** said that education law made it clear that there should be no discrimination against sexually diverse children. Teachers and learners were expected to abide by a code of conduct that promoted equality and inclusivity for all. Admittedly, there seemed to be some problems when it came to putting the legislative provisions into practice. The Department of Basic Education had therefore issued a Protocol for the Elimination of Unfair Discrimination in Schools, as well as Guidelines for the Socio-educational Inclusion of Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sex Characteristics in Schools. Once those documents had been approved by the Council of Education Ministers, the appropriate measures, including mediation, orientation and training, would be taken to prevent discrimination against intersex children in schools.

51. **A representative of South Africa** said that, as her Government had not received the report of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on its visit to South Africa until 1 December 2023, it was too early to say what was being done to respond to its recommendations.

52. **Ms. Sekawana** (South Africa) said that children were regarded as the future of the country. The Government therefore gave priority to investment in children's well-being. Despite budgetary cuts, the appropriations for children's welfare had been ringfenced to ensure that the rights of the child would be upheld.

53. **A representative of South Africa** said that the delegation had taken note of the Committee's concerns with regard to the child justice system. The Government would

endeavour to comply with its recommendations. A review of the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 was planned in the forthcoming financial year. Issues such as early release and the transfer of children from secure care centres would be examined as part of the review of the Probation Services Act 116 of 1991.

54. **A representative of South Africa** said that the National Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Plan 2023–2030 incorporated plans to upgrade the theoretical and practical training of mental health professionals. In order to ensure that basic mental health services were provided on an ongoing basis, primary health care workers would also receive language competency training to enable them to communicate with patients who spoke Indigenous African languages. Medical interns would be encouraged to specialize in psychiatry and psychology.

55. **A representative of South Africa** said that research by the University of Pretoria, published in June 2023, had shown that female genital mutilation sometimes occurred owing to certain religious beliefs. The report had recommended steps to identify girls at risk of cutting. The National Department of Social Development had studied the recommendations and how to give effect to them.

56. The Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour would guide the steps taken to end child labour by 2030. The agricultural sector had been given priority, as that was where the greatest risk of hazardous work by children lay. The measures put in place included the introduction of subsidies for farmers, to enable them to pay adult farm workers, and the expansion of sickness benefits for parents, so that their children could attend school rather than having to go out to work.

57. Any violation of food marketing and labelling regulations made the perpetrator, including companies, liable to criminal prosecution. In addition, campaigns were run to inform consumers of their rights. An active Competition Commission also dealt with unethical marketing practices in the food sector.

58. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Government recognized the need to step up its efforts to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, which had become less of a priority in the context of the national response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It needed to review the latest studies and research on HIV/AIDS prevention to ensure that its actions were effective. Future initiatives should be focused on raising awareness among different population groups, such as adult men and disadvantaged girls.

59. In general, his country was committed to participating in international conventions. However, the practice of culture was protected in the Constitution. The Government was therefore obliged to consider the impact that alignment with the provisions of international conventions would have on the cultural practices of the various communities in South Africa.

60. **A representative of South Africa** said that it was unacceptable for South African peacekeeping personnel to be involved in misconduct during their missions with the United Nations. The Government had taken a number of measures to support victims of sexual exploitation and abuse at the hands of peacekeepers. First, it had adopted the Paternity and Maintenance Support Strategy to help bring claims of paternity and child support before national courts, including through bilateral cooperation with authorities in other countries. Secondly, the Chief of Staff of the South African National Defence Force had been put in charge of a paternity and maintenance support team tasked with assisting victims and lawyers wishing to seek compensation under the national legal system. Thirdly, under national legislation, the man whom the mother alleged was the father of a child was regarded as such unless a paternity test proved otherwise. Lastly, since 2018, DNA samples had been collected from all South African peacekeepers prior to their deployment with the United Nations. Those DNA samples were stored so that, where necessary, they could be used for the purpose of paternity analysis or investigations into criminal or civil claims.

61. **A representative of South Africa** said that cases of sexual abuse against children were reported not only to the police but also to teachers and social workers. All allegations were investigated under the Sexual Offences Act by the investigating officers of the South African Police Service, in cooperation with the interministerial Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster. Cases were also referred to the Department of Social Development, which

carried out an assessment of the child victim and ensured that he or she received the necessary therapeutic and psychological support. In cases where the sexual abuse had taken place within the family or had been perpetrated by a family member, the child was automatically regarded as being in need of protection under the Children's Act and placement in alternative care was sought.

62. **A representative of South Africa** said that the Government, through its District Development Model, promoted the coordination of services across all municipalities.

63. **A representative of South Africa** said that the National Environmental Management Act provided for the liability of operators who caused pollution or degradation of the environment. To complement that legislation, certain government departments had adopted their own implementation plans on the subject of environmental responsibility. The Department of Transport had introduced a plan for the transport sector, for example.

64. Schools were entitled to choose one or more languages of instruction, depending on the communities they served. Many schools still taught in Afrikaans, which remained a national language. The Soweto Uprising was celebrated every year on 16 June, not least as a reminder that the authorities must not impose a language of instruction on its people. Generally speaking, those commemorations provided an opportunity to raise awareness about languages and the importance of language within the cultural diversity of South Africa.

65. **Ms. Sekawana** (South Africa) said that the Government had launched the Vangasali Campaign, an initiative aimed at identifying all the places where early childhood development programmes had been put in place. A grading system had also been adopted, under which the different programmes could register and identify the improvements they needed to make in order to reach the gold standard of service. In turn, that system had enabled the Government to develop an upscaling and funding strategy to ascertain the scale of the investments required. The State subsidies currently offered to early childhood development programmes were not sufficient, but the relevant government department understood the extent of the shortfall and could use that information to lobby for greater funding.

66. **Ms. Aho** said that she would still like to hear about any action the State party might be taking to combat the spread of tuberculosis. She also wished to know whether the Government intended to take steps to remove the obligation for DNA testing as a prerequisite for birth registration in cases of children born out of wedlock to a South African father and a foreign mother.

67. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** said that she wished to know what measures were being taken to investigate allegations that the State party's efforts to improve sanitation and education facilities at schools were being severely hampered by corruption. It would be helpful to hear whether alleged perpetrators had been prosecuted and brought to justice. She would also be interested to hear the delegation's response to reports suggesting that pregnant girls were effectively being prevented from staying in school and that headteachers were not reporting their cases to the relevant authorities.

68. **Mr. Van Keirsbilck** said that he would be interested to know whether the Government was aware of any illegal adoptions that had previously taken place in the State party and, if so, whether any action had been taken to investigate those cases and whether any prosecutions had been brought. He also wished to know whether persons who had been adopted in early childhood ever requested information on their biological families and, if so, how the authorities responded to such requests. Lastly, he wished to know whether a child being held in solitary confinement in a detention centre or a secure care centre would have independent access to remedies and complaint mechanisms.

69. **A representative of South Africa** said that 8.6 per cent of all persons infected with tuberculosis in his country were children. The Government had issued national guidelines for the management of tuberculosis in children, which included guidance on prevention of infection, clinical management of infected children and the treatment of drug-resistant tuberculosis. The guidelines also contained a section on initiating antiretroviral therapy of HIV/AIDS in children found to have tuberculosis.

70. **A representative of South Africa** said that it was not mandatory for a father to undergo a DNA test in order to register the birth of his child. However, irrespective of his

nationality, any man presenting himself as the father could be referred for DNA testing when there was reasonable doubt regarding the paternity of the child.

71. **A representative of South Africa** said that there were two types of adoption in South Africa: open adoptions and closed adoptions. Biological parents had more control in open adoptions, since they could specify the type of adoptive family they would like to find for their child. Adopted children sometimes wished to trace their biological families when they turned 18. The authorities assisted them in that process, although it should be noted that it was often an emotionally challenging experience for them to discover their family or country of origin for the first time.

72. **A representative of South Africa** said that the latest available statistics on early pregnancy showed that around 132,000 girls had been recorded as pregnant in the period 2020–2021. The Department of Health and Department of Education had jointly developed a policy intended to create an enabling environment to support all learners and prevent discrimination and stigmatization of pregnant schoolgirls. Under the policy, girls were encouraged to continue attending school during the early months of pregnancy and were then provided with learning support while they were absent from class. The aim of the policy was to prevent them falling behind in their studies and to encourage them to return to school after giving birth.

73. The Department of Education was committed to improving water, sanitation, electricity and basic infrastructure at schools through the Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative and the Sanitation Appropriate for Education Initiative, as well as provincial infrastructure programmes. Those initiatives received public funding by way of the School Infrastructure Backlog Grant and the Education Infrastructure Grant. As a result of their implementation, 2,403 schools had been provided with water, 5,568 with electricity and 14,517 with new sanitation facilities. A total of 1,089 new and replacement schools had been built and 8,598 maintenance projects had been carried out. In parallel, over 36,000 learners with special education needs had been provided with free transport to and from school through subsidized transport programmes.

74. **Mr. Jaffé**, thanking the members of the delegation for their contribution to a valuable and constructive dialogue, said that there remained obvious obstacles to the State party's implementation of the Convention, not least the challenges of overcoming poverty and coordinating action across a vast and diverse country. However, the delegation's replies had shown that children were a priority for the Government and that an abundance of effervescent initiatives, programmes and policies had been put in place to address their well-being.

75. **Ms. Sekawana** (South Africa) said that the members of the delegation had been grateful for the opportunity to present their country's report. The Committee's questions had given the Government much to ponder, and it looked forward to consulting relevant stakeholders to ensure that all observations and recommendations were incorporated into the overall action plan for children.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.