



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child Seventy-fourth session

Summary record of the 2184th meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 30 January 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Mezmur

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* No summary record was issued for the 2183rd meeting.

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

Consideration of reports of States parties (continued)

Combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi (CRC/C/MWI/3-5, CRC/C/MWI/Q/3-5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Malawi took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Tembenu** (Malawi), presenting the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi on the Convention, said that the Constitution still defined a child as a person under the age of 16 years, whereas the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act defined a child as a person under the age of 18 years. The discrepancy was about to be resolved, however, since a bill to amend the definition contained in the Constitution would be debated in Parliament the following week. The amendment would also raise the marriageable age to 18 years, in line with the corresponding provision in the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act. The Government had nullified more than 650,000 child marriages through the implementation of local strategies.
3. As recommended by the Committee in its concluding observations on the State party's second periodic report (CRC/C/MWI/CO/2), Malawi had enacted the following laws: the Child Care Protection and Justice Act; the National Registration Act; the Deceased Estate (Wills and Inheritance) Act; the Disability Act; the Gender Equality Act; the Education Act; the Penal Code (Amendment) Act; the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Code (Amendment) Act; the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act; and the Trafficking in Persons Act. The Government had thus created a legislative and policy environment conducive to the promotion and protection of children's rights.
4. The Government's policies and action plans for children included: the Early Child Development Policy; the National Human Rights Action Plan (2016-2020); the National Plan of Action for Vulnerable Children (2015-2019); the National Education Sector Plan; the National Plan of Action for Children with Disabilities; the Child Protection Strategy; and the Gender-Based Violence Response Plan of Action.
5. The Government had established a structure to address the atrocities committed against persons living with albinism and had taken steps to fast-track the prosecution of perpetrators. Judicial proceedings concerning more than 39 per cent of the cases concerned had been concluded.
6. The Government had stepped up action against child labour and established safe havens for children. It had organized in-service training courses for more than 120 social welfare workers. Gender and social work curricula in institutions of higher learning had been reviewed. The budget for early childhood development had been increased from 50 million Malawi kwacha (MK) (approximately US\$ 70,000) to MK 1 billion (US\$ 1.4 million) during the previous three years. Furthermore, 75 per cent of social cash transfer beneficiaries were children.
7. The Government had begun constructing modern child justice courts. In addition, border district courts were being rehabilitated to make them child- and victim-friendly. Special magistrates had been designated to handle child-related cases and had been familiarized with human rights and child-related legislation. The Government had established a national coordination committee and a fund to address trafficking in persons. A plan of action was being developed to combat child trafficking.
8. With a view to producing disaggregated data, the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare had established a child protection information management system. It had also strengthened coordination in all districts through the Joint Sector

Strategic Plan. All districts now had technical working groups, composed of representatives of the Government and civil society organizations, to coordinate child-related issues. Child participation had been promoted through the creation of “children’s corners” throughout the country. In 2016, the Government had trained 600 facilitators for children’s corners.

9. Malawi required a great deal of technical support to implement its obligations under human rights treaties, and it lacked the resources required to address all concerns raised by treaty bodies. To make matters worse, the country had been severely affected during the previous three years by droughts and floods. Malawi therefore called on its development partners to increase support for the effective and efficient implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

10. **Mr. Nelson** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that the Committee had just received the document containing the State party’s replies to the list of issues and had therefore been unable to take note of all its content. However, the Government stated in its reply to issue No. 1 that it planned to review its comprehensive policy on children. He asked how soon it hoped to implement the revised policy. Commending the enactment of a large number of new laws, he enquired about measures to coordinate their implementation. The budgetary figures contained in the replies to the list of issues failed to specify what proportion of the funds allocated to ministries was devoted to child support and children’s rights. Was a large proportion of the funds used to pay staff salaries?

11. With regard to the “Cashgate” corruption scandal, and noting that the Government had developed a code of ethics for civil servants, he asked whether arrangements had been made for training in the Code and whether action had been taken to hold civil servants accountable. Had there been any prosecutions for Cashgate-related corruption and bribery?

12. He wished to know whether the data produced by the Child Protection Information Management System were disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical location and other variables.

13. It would be useful to learn about measures to support the work of the Child Rights Department of the Malawi Human Rights Commission. He also asked whether awareness-raising campaigns were being conducted on children’s rights, and whether training courses in implementing the Convention were held for relevant staff. Noting the growing number of civil society organizations in the State party, he enquired about their interaction with the Government. In particular, did the Government pay due regard to their recommendations concerning children’s rights?

14. He would appreciate information on the measures taken to monitor compliance with health regulations and standards by international mining companies, especially in Karonga District and Kayelekera. The Committee had been informed of increased respiratory problems among children in those areas, difficulties in securing access to health-care facilities and contaminated drinking water.

15. He asked whether the Government intended to enact legislation prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings, not only in State-run institutions, and whether any awareness-raising programmes on non-violent forms of child-rearing and alternative forms of discipline had been run for parents and teachers.

16. The Committee had been informed that the police regularly rounded up large numbers of children living in the streets of large towns. He wondered whether the children were transferred to some kind of facility and whether they were processed through the juvenile justice system. Random acts of police violence had long been a problem in the State party. He had recently read about the shooting of a 14-year-old student in Kasungu District. He asked whether the perpetrators had been prosecuted and enquired about the policy concerning police conduct in such situations.

17. The Committee had been informed of an increase in cases of defilement of young children and of a civil society protest the previous week in Karonga District. He enquired about the scale of the problem and the measures being taken to address it. He asked whether there were any programmes aimed at preventing violence against children and, if so, how they were funded and who conducted them. Harmful traditional cultural practices reported to the Committee included sexual cleansing (*kusasa fumbi*) and the pledging of children as collateral. It would be useful to learn about the action being taken to address such practices. Were traditional leaders and persons who advocated them targeted?

18. Noting that one-stop centres to support victims of violence existed in various towns, he asked how accessible they were to children living in rural areas. The Committee had been informed of funding issues, for instance with regard to staff training. Were helplines available only in urban areas, and were children and families aware of the existence of the 24-hour service?

19. **Ms. Khazova** (Country Task Force) said that she welcomed the Government's decision to align the Constitution and other relevant laws with the Convention, particularly the definition of a child. She asked whether any obstacles were expected in Parliament to the enactment of such amendments.

20. Legislation to prevent widespread early marriage was essential. It should be supported by campaigns to raise parents' and communities' awareness of the negative impact of the practice and to promote its elimination.

21. Enactment of the Gender Equality Act, the Disability Act and other legislation aimed at combating discrimination was commendable. However, inadequate funding and human resources impeded the effective operation of relevant institutions. Moreover, the general public was largely unaware of the legislation. She enquired about plans to increase funding and human resources and to raise awareness among the general public, parents, teachers and other staff working with children.

22. The action taken to protect children with albinism, as described in the State party's replies to the list of issues, was also commendable. However, she asked whether the measures were accompanied by awareness-raising programmes for communities and parents, since parents sometimes actually organized the killing of children with albinism. What steps were taken to promote a friendly environment for such children, such as access to sun protection lotions and other facilities that would enable them to attend school and participate fully in social life? She also wondered why no action was taken to prevent discrimination against intersex children.

23. Promotion of the best interests of the child was mentioned in the Constitution and in some legislation, but administrative bodies were not required to apply that principle when taking decisions affecting children. She enquired about measures to ensure that it was systematically applied in all areas and that relevant staff received training in its implications.

24. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** (Country Task Force) said that the delegation should describe what steps had been taken to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Youth Parliament and to guarantee adequate funding. It would be useful to learn about specific action to ensure that children's opinions were taken into account in communities and schools, in administrative and legal proceedings, and in public policies.

25. She would appreciate information about measures to support children with disabilities and children living in impoverished or rural areas. Further details should also be provided of programmes to promote children's awareness of their rights.

26. As the National Registration Act of 2010 had not entered into force until 2015, she assumed that rates of registration were unduly low. She enquired about measures such as awareness-raising campaigns to ensure universal compliance with the requirement for birth

registration, as the “entry point” for all human rights, and asked whether there were plans to establish mobile registration facilities for families living in remote areas. Noting that four district hospitals were using an electronic birth registration system, she asked how long it would take to extend such services to the remaining districts. Was it true that the existence of a disability could not be mentioned in the birth registration form?

27. The media frequently failed to comply with recommended child protection regulations, and no sanctions were imposed in such circumstances. She asked when the Access to Information Bill was likely to be enacted. She also enquired about media coverage of children’s views, needs and interests. Was action being taken to facilitate access by children to the social media, computers and the Internet? Lastly, she asked whether the State party protected children’s right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

28. **Ms. Parsi** (Country Task Force) said that, according to a survey conducted in 2013, one fifth of all females and one seventh of all males aged 18-24 years had experienced at least one incident of sexual abuse before reaching the age of 18 years. Reported cases of defilement by schoolmates, romantic partners, friends, neighbours, family members and strangers were increasing. The sexual abuse and harassment of girls by male teachers was a widespread problem. Adolescents were also subjected to harmful cultural practices. In addition, girls and women with mental or physical disabilities were frequently the target of sexual violence. The response to such cases was inadequate. Victims or their caretakers were often reluctant to report incidents because cultural norms frequently held children responsible for defilement. In some cases, people were unaware of how to address the concern effectively and appropriately. In other cases, offenders paid victims to withdraw the cases against them and therefore enjoyed impunity.

29. She asked what specific measures had been or would be taken to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation at home and in school, and how awareness-raising programmes would be implemented to change discriminatory and guilt-inducing attitudes to victims. Were there special recovery and reintegration programmes for victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking, and were the one-stop centres easily accessible?

30. Abuse and neglect could assume sexual, psychological, economic and financial forms and were both a cause and a result of poverty. What measures had been taken to prohibit all forms of violence against children and to punish all forms of abuse and neglect?

31. Notwithstanding the prohibition of discrimination against people with disabilities in the Constitution and the Disability Act, children with disabilities faced many practical difficulties. For instance, access to health care was impeded by the lack of appropriate transport, hospital premises were not disability-friendly, and children with hearing or speech problems found it impossible to communicate with health-care staff. She asked whether there were special training courses for health-care professionals who attended to children with special needs. What financial resources were allocated to meet the children’s needs and to remove physical barriers impeding their access to schools and health care? She also enquired about steps to remove the social and psychological barriers that impeded full acceptance of children with special needs at school and in their communities.

The meeting was suspended at 10.50 a.m. and resumed at 11.15 a.m.

32. **Ms. Shawa** (Malawi) said that the Government was expected to adopt the revised comprehensive policy on children by June 2017. Some strategies and activities outlined in the policy were already being implemented.

33. The resources in the budget allocated to work with children did not include the salaries of Ministry staff, which were paid separately.

34. The Government had established a school in which civil servants received training in the Code of Ethics. Many persons involved in Cashgate had been prosecuted. With a view to promoting accountability, all public officials now declared their assets, which were systematically monitored to prevent corruption.
35. Many mechanisms had been established to coordinate the new legislation, including technical working groups chaired by the Minister of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare. The members, who included representatives of the Malawi Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations, shared knowledge and developed strategies.
36. The Child Protection Information Management System compiled disaggregated data concerning children's age, sex and geographical location and the status of children with disabilities and albinism.
37. **Mr. Tembenu** (Malawi) said that most of the persons involved in the Cashgate fraud had either been charged or were serving prison sentences. More than 13 cases had been concluded and cases involving about 19 persons were ongoing. Proceedings would later be brought against the masterminds of Cashgate. On the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day, the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs would conduct a national anti-corruption dialogue on action taken by each stakeholder to combat corruption.
38. The arrests undertaken by the police had focused not on children living in the streets but on vagabonds who roamed the streets at night. The High Court had recently ruled that such arrests were unconstitutional. Children removed from the streets were sent to public-sector institutions such as reformatories or to facilities run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Samaritans.
39. Action to change harmful practices stemming from cultural beliefs was a long-term challenge. The authorities disseminated information aimed at persuading people to refrain from engaging in such practices. A man infected with the HIV virus had recently been sentenced to prison for engaging in ritual sex with women in Malawian villages. The Ministry of Health was proposing legislation on management of HIV and AIDS. Once it entered into force, the authorities would have a sound basis to criminalize harmful practices, including those based on cultural traditions.
40. Many awareness-raising campaigns were conducted for children by the Malawi Human Rights Commission and NGOs. Children could also discuss their problems in the children's corners and children's clubs.
41. The Government had a close relationship with civil society organizations, especially those dealing with children's affairs, and relevant technical committees took their concerns into account and listened carefully to their recommendations.
42. Vigorous action was being taken to facilitate access to victim support centres for people living in rural areas.
43. With regard to the impact of uranium mining on children living in the Karonga District and Kayelekera, mining activities had been suspended for some time because of a crash in prices. NGOs working in the Karonga District were collaborating with the Government in safeguarding children from hazards.
44. Corporal punishment was discouraged in homes and in both private and public schools. No teacher was permitted to administer such punishment.
45. No obstacles were expected in Parliament to the enactment of an amendment to the Constitution to change the age of marriage. A consensus had been achieved among all stakeholders.

46. The lack of adequate resources constituted a major impediment to action aimed at combating discrimination. Measures were being taken to ensure that existing resources were equitably shared among deserving bodies. The Government had discussed the problem of violence against children with albinism during a visit by Amnesty International. Amendments to the law criminalizing all acts of violence against them had been enacted in 2016. In addition, vigorous and widespread awareness-raising campaigns were bearing fruit.
47. The resolutions adopted by the Youth Parliament were not binding but they were taken into account by the Government when policies were formulated.
48. The Parliament had adopted the Access to Information Act in November 2016. Children would be included among the beneficiaries. The Malawi Human Rights Commission would ensure that information was readily available to all citizens.
49. **Ms. Kalilani** (Malawi) said that the national child helpline operated through three regional call centres. A toll-free number was available through all telecommunication providers, and radio awareness-raising campaigns encouraged children to use the facility.
50. A campaign against early marriage had been launched in October 2014. It focused on traditional leaders and parents and was coordinated by a national task force. A key objective was to encourage girls to remain in school.
51. A national response plan to combat violence against children was being implemented by all relevant ministries, departments and agencies, and by civil society, parents and children. A five-year campaign on ending violence against children had been launched in December 2015. Its theme was “Protect and care: violence is not a solution”.
52. The Clerk of the National Assembly chaired the national task force on the Youth Parliament. The Government would shortly allocate financial resources to supplement the funds provided by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other civil society organizations.
53. There were school prefects or councils in the education system that presented children’s views on how schools could best be run or managed.
54. **Ms. Shawa** (Malawi) said that, in addition to the 18 one-stop centres, 300 community victim support units and 200 police victim support units provided access to services for child victims of violence.
55. Police officers were attached to each school to observe developments in the area of corporal punishment. In addition, the community protection structure advised teachers and communities on corporal punishment issues. Counselling procedures and psychosocial support were available for both parents and child victims.
56. **Ms. Kalilani** (Malawi) said that birth registration facilities would soon be available in all district hospitals. A national identity card scheme had also been launched. All expectant mothers were encouraged to deliver in hospital. When births took place in a village, the infant was conveyed as soon as possible to the nearest hospital for registration. Cases of disability were recorded in the birth registration certificate.
57. **Ms. Khazova** said that she wished to receive further details of what had happened to the 650,000 children whose marriages had been nullified during the previous two years as part of the campaign to eradicate early marriage. Had they been able to return to school? If any children had been born as a result of those marriages, how were they looked after? The delegation should provide more information about the HeForShe campaign.
58. **Mr. Nelson** asked whether the State party was taking any additional measures to address the steep increase in cases of violence against children.

59. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that she wished to know how many schools had councils and what their purpose was.

60. **Ms. Shawa** (Malawi) said that the 650,000 children whose marriages had been nullified, one third of whom were boys, had been encouraged to return to school. If the marriage had resulted in the birth of a child, once the child was over the age of 6 months he or she was looked after by the mother's parents or at an early childhood centre while the mother attended school. School counsellors provided psychosocial support to the children who had been married, and the Government covered the cost of tuition and school supplies for them.

61. Malawi was one of the nine global champions of the HeForShe campaign, under which the Government had pledged to end child marriage. Cabinet ministers, members of parliament, traditional leaders and representatives of faith-based organizations had been invited to join the movement.

62. **Ms. Kalilani** (Malawi) said that the steep rise in recorded cases of violence was attributable to improved measuring systems and more effective indicators. The Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare had engaged a lawyer to follow up on cases of defilement, but more legal personnel were required to deal with the large caseload.

63. **Ms. Shawa** (Malawi) said that children with special needs were assessed and referred to the services they required. The Government was training special needs teachers, but more resources were needed.

64. In partnership with the National Registration Bureau and UNICEF, the authorities would shortly implement a programme to register any child under the age of 16 years who had not already been registered.

65. **Mr. Nelson** said that it would be useful to learn whether there were any specific causes of the low rate of prosecutions and convictions for violence against children and what was being done to address them.

66. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that she wished to know whether the legislation on access to information covered the use of images of children, and whether any sanctions were applied to journalists who did not observe the protection measures in place.

67. **Mr. Tembenu** (Malawi) said that a major factor affecting the number of prosecutions was the lack of capacity to process cases in a timely manner. All cases involving children in conflict with the law were dealt with in child justice courts. Children testified via video link to protect their identity.

68. The legislation on access to information was awaiting presidential assent.

69. **Ms. Kayira** (Malawi) said that individuals were often reluctant to report cases of violence to the police, preferring to resolve matters informally. Police investigations and court cases were often lengthy, thus affecting the number of prosecutions and convictions.

70. Regulations were in place to ensure that cases involving children were kept confidential. When details of cases were shared, children were identified by their initials only.

71. **Ms. Shawa** (Malawi) said that every school had a police officer attached to it and either one or two counsellors, depending on the number of students enrolled there. Before cases were sent to court, probation officers compiled case reports to support judges and the prosecution team. The number of probation officers was dwindling and more were needed. The lawyer who had been retained by the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare had handled more than 3,000 cases in the previous 12 months.

72. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that the delegation should clarify whether the police officers in schools were in fact private security guards and what their role was in protecting children.

73. **Ms. Shawa** (Malawi) said that the police officers attached to schools were not uniformed. Their role was to work in partnership with counsellors and parents to detect and prevent violence. The system had been successful in identifying teachers and parents who had perpetrated violence against children.

74. **Mr. Madi** said that he wished to learn how, for the purposes of marriage with parental consent, the authorities established the age of individuals whose birth had not been registered. The delegation should clarify on which grounds the decision to nullify 650,000 marriages had been taken.

75. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she wished to learn how the authorities determined the age of children in conflict with the law if their birth had not been registered. It was unclear why the electronic birth registration system had been deployed in hospitals in only four districts in the State party. The delegation should clarify whether the birth registration process was free of charge and how long it took, and give details of the training provided to the personnel responsible for completing birth registrations. Did a handwritten birth certificate carry the same weight as one that had been produced electronically? It would be helpful to learn about the causes of the low birth registration rate and about any campaigns to inform parents about the registration process. In table 1, on harmful traditional practices, in the State party's replies to the list of issues, it was unclear what was meant by the term "reduced" in relation to child marriages, polygamy and wife inheritance.

76. **Ms. Aldoseri** said that she wished to know whether babies born to children whose marriages had been nullified were able to maintain contact with their father. Had the nullified marriages simply been suspended until the minors involved reached the age of 18 years?

77. **The Chair** (Country Task Force), welcoming the implementation of the State party's integrated information system, said that it would be useful to learn which departments and ministries had access to the information held in the system. Was the data collection system in line with the proposed constitutional amendment raising the age of majority to 18 years? The delegation should explain how the outcome of the functional review undertaken in the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare would impact on children in real terms.

78. **Mr. Tembenu** (Malawi) said that if a child who wished to marry did not have a birth certificate, a parent or close relative could testify to the child's age by swearing an affidavit before the marriage officer. Giving false information was a criminal offence, and marriages found to have taken place based on false information were nullified. Parents were compelled by law to register their children, and retroactive registration was taking place to provide people with national identity cards.

79. The information held in the data-collection system could be accessed by a number of ministries, which required it for various purposes.

80. **Ms. Shawa** (Malawi) said that many traditional leaders and religious organizations maintained birth records, which could be used in ascertaining the age of a child who did not have a birth certificate. The electronic birth registration system had been piloted in four districts and was being rolled out to the remaining districts. Age groups which had missed out on registration, notably 2-year-olds and 16-year-olds, were being targeted under a specific three-year registration programme. Handwritten birth certificates were gradually being replaced by electronic ones as more and more hospital staff received training in how to use the electronic system.

81. Children born as a result of an early marriage which had later been nullified were entitled to maintain contact with their father. Where the child's mother was in contact with the father, she received family planning counselling to ensure that she did not become pregnant again and could remain in school.

82. **Ms. Kalilani** (Malawi) said that data entry for birth registrations was done electronically in the hospitals. The data were then sent via the Internet to the database held by the district commissioner's office, from where parents could later collect the birth certificate once it had been issued by the National Registration Bureau. If computers were not available, the registration information could be recorded by hand and entered into the electronic system later. The new registration system recorded deaths as well as births. National identity cards contained a chip.

83. The outcome of the functional review had led to the introduction of senior officers who would represent the Ministry for Gender, Children, Disability and Welfare at the district level.

84. For children born as a result of a marriage which had been nullified, contact with their father was determined based on the best interests of each child.

85. **Mr. Tembenu** (Malawi) said that much work had been done to change mindsets with regard to raising the age of majority to 18 years. Once the amendments to the Constitution were in place, there would no longer be a conflict between the definition of the child and the minimum age for marriage stipulated in the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act.

86. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that further details on the different forms of foster care in the State party, including safety homes and reformatory centres, would be welcome. She wished to learn whether foster care centres were legally registered, whether quality standards were in place for them and whether children in care were monitored. How many children with disabilities were living in foster care centres? The delegation should indicate whether the Government had a policy on deinstitutionalization and, if so, give details of its implementation. She wished to know what was being done to combat violence in care centres and whether it was expressly prohibited in law. It would be useful to have a full account of the policies in place to support child-headed households. She wished to learn what progress had been made on the adoption bill, how the Government promoted adoption, and whether the State party had ratified the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption. She would appreciate information regarding the arrangements made for children whose mothers were in prison and who had no other relatives able to care for them. The delegation should indicate whether there were plans to apply in practice the provision for the authorities to deem caring for a child to be an attenuating circumstance when making sentencing decisions for mothers.

87. **Ms. Khazova** said that, while the State party had made progress in the area of health, she would be interested to hear about the Government's plans to tackle the high rate of chronic malnutrition among children under the age of 5 years and the large numbers of children dying from preventable causes. The delegation should explain how the State party would ensure that children with disabilities were included in the immunization programme, and how it intended to address the shortage of medicines, medical personnel and health-care infrastructure, which was particularly acute in rural areas. The status of the planned legislation regarding HIV and AIDS should be clarified. Given that the rate of teenage pregnancy in the State party was one of the highest in the world and that it reportedly accounted for between 20 and 30 per cent of maternal deaths nationally, the delegation should indicate what plans the Government had for improving the situation. She wished to know whether sex education was mandatory in schools, both public and private, and whether teenagers were able to access contraceptives. The delegation should clarify

whether the contraception services included in the costed implementation plan for family planning 2016-2020 were available to unmarried girls. Noting that the State party had some of the most restrictive abortion legislation in the world, she would appreciate further details of the main provisions of the planned amendments to it and the timeline for its adoption.

88. **Ms. Parsi** said that she would welcome an update on the implementation of the Disability Act and the establishment of the Disability Trust Fund. She wished to know whether the local authorities maintained a register of children with disabilities. The delegation should comment on how the Government intended to tackle the causes of school dropout, the rate of which remained high, particularly among girls, and to address the hidden costs of school attendance, including uniforms and travel expenses. How was the Government implementing compulsory education? Given that 90 per cent of children with disabilities in the State party did not have access to education, she wished to learn about the measures that would be taken to enable such children to exercise their right to education. It would be useful to learn how the authorities planned to promote early childhood development services. The delegation should provide information on teacher training and evaluation programmes in the State party. She wished to know how the Government planned to facilitate education for girls and whether it intended to train more female teachers. Information would be welcome on how the authorities protected girls from sexual harassment in schools and punished the perpetrators. Lastly, she wished to learn about measures to increase enrolments in technical and vocational training and higher education.

89. **Mr. Nelson** said that he wished to know what the outcome of the national plan of action on child labour had been and whether a replacement plan was envisaged. Noting that child labour was common on tobacco plantations, he asked whether standards were in place to regulate working conditions there and, if so, how many prosecutions had been launched following breaches of those standards. He wished to learn about the contents and outcome of the national strategy regarding children living and working on the streets, and whether the strategy was ongoing. The delegation should provide data on cases involving the trafficking of children and the outcomes of those cases, and comment on reports that penalties were imposed inconsistently in such cases. He wished to know whether the authorities intended to raise the age of criminal responsibility, which stood at 10 years. He would appreciate information on powers to detain children for serious crimes, including what those powers were intended to cover and whether they were invoked in practice. He wished to know whether juvenile offenders were held in Kachere juvenile prison, which the Prison Service had described as unfit for human habitation. Were female and male juvenile offenders held separately? The delegation should indicate whether the Government intended to make changes to the legislation requiring corroboration of court testimony. He wished to know whether the statistics showing that 16 children had been sentenced to death between 1994 and 2005 were correct.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.