



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 2373rd meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 14 May 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Pedernera Reyna

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* No summary records were issued for the 2372nd meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties

Initial report of Tonga (CRC/C/TON/1; CRC/C/TON/Q/1; and CRC/C/TON/Q/1/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Tonga took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. 'Esau** (Tonga) said that Tonga was a low-lying small island State, located in the South Pacific Ocean, whose very existence was threatened by climate change and rising sea levels. For that reason, the human rights of all Tongans were intricately bound up with the environment. Tongan society was structured along kinship or extended family lines. Tongan children were born into an extended family and grew up with the support of that family. All family members, together with neighbours and other village residents, church ministers and members, and district and town officers, were responsible for bringing up children. In recent years, however, internal and external migration had had a fragmenting effect on extended families, creating challenges with regard to the care of preschool children, orphans and children living in mental health facilities and prisons. The need for counselling services had increased. There was also a need for more accurate and relevant data.
3. The National Coordinating Committee for Children, established in 1997, was responsible for coordinating activities aimed at implementing the Convention. Since the ratification of the Convention by Tonga in 1995, its implementation had been hindered by a number of factors, including resource constraints and social, economic and political factors that gave rise to competing obligations. The Government was aware that the conflicting definitions of a child set out in the country's legislation undermined its ability to properly implement the Convention. That was particularly the case in the area of criminal justice. The Government recognized that the minimum age of criminal responsibility established by law was well below the age recommended by the Committee. In conjunction with the country's development partners, the Government was considering developing a youth diversion scheme that would serve as the basis for a formal juvenile justice system. Although that process was still at the discussion stage, the development of the scheme was expected to involve an extensive review of legislation that would bring the definition of a child in domestic legislation into line with the Convention.
4. While the provisions of the Convention had not been extensively incorporated into domestic legislation, the courts had applied it in a number of cases involving children. As a result, young persons were now less likely to be sentenced to whipping or the death penalty, and the principle of the best interests of the child had been applied in relevant cases. The Family Protection Act 2013 and the Education Act 2013, together with the child protection policy of the Tonga Health Promotion Foundation, provided children with improved protection from domestic violence and better access to quality basic education. Plans were in place to amend the Computer Crimes Act in order to strengthen legislation and policies aimed at combating online sexual exploitation and violence against children, including online bullying.
5. The Government had taken a number of legislative measures to ensure that the rights enshrined in the Convention were effectively protected in the areas of health and education as well as in the home. The second Tonga Strategic Development Framework and the Tonga National Youth Strategy 2014–2019 set out courses of action that had had a positive impact on Tongan children. Responsibility for protecting children's welfare was currently dispersed among a number of different government ministries and stakeholders. However, the establishment of a national strategy and a national body for child protection and the reinvigoration of the National Coordinating Committee on Children would help to ensure that efforts to implement the Convention were conducted in a more integrated manner.
6. The Government's efforts to implement the Convention had been bolstered by cooperation with international agencies and civil society organizations. The establishment of national and international partnerships had strengthened efforts to provide compulsory education for children, increase access to justice and legal protection in cases of domestic violence and enhance access to civil registration, vaccination and health-care services.

7. **Ms. Aldoseri** (Country Rapporteur) said that she would like to know whether the Government had any plans to bring national law fully into line with the Convention and, if so, when that work would begin. In particular, she wished to know how and when the different definitions of a child in national legislation would be harmonized and brought into line with the Convention and whether, in the meantime, any interim measures were being taken to protect children's rights. It would be interesting to learn what parts of the Education Act 2013 were not in line with the Convention. She noted that, under the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act, 15-year-old boys and girls were legally able to marry; she wondered whether any plans were in place to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years. The minimum age of criminal responsibility in Tonga – 7 years – was unusually low, and she would like to know what efforts were being made to bring that age into alignment with international standards.

8. It would be useful to know whether the State party was taking steps to formulate a single national action plan for all children that would cover all areas of their lives and serve as a guide for government ministries in their efforts to implement the Convention. It would also be interesting to learn the most important outcome of the national youth policy, which was due to end in 2019.

9. The Government had indicated that it relied heavily on international aid. She wondered how sustainable that aid was and whether any plan had been drawn up to maintain the provision of services to children in the event that such aid was reduced. She would like to know whether the Government used a tracking system to ensure that the budget allocated to different programmes had been spent effectively and whether the Government followed the guidance in the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2016), on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights. She would welcome an update on what concrete steps had been taken to establish a desk within the Attorney General's Office for monitoring the implementation of the Convention. It would also be interesting to hear whether it might be possible to establish a department or division for protecting children's rights within the Ombudsman's Office. In addition, it would be useful to know what steps were being taken to ensure that children, and persons who worked with them, knew about the rights enshrined in the Convention and whether any regular campaigns were conducted to raise awareness of its provisions.

10. She wondered whether the prohibition of corporal punishment under the Education Act 2013 was limited to schools or whether it included other settings, such as the home. The Committee would welcome information on the measures taken to enforce the ban on corporal punishment, the sanctions imposed on persons who violated that ban and any complaints mechanisms through which violations could be reported. The Committee would also like to know what measures would be taken to revive the children's support hotline known as the Tonga Lifeline.

11. **Mr. Nelson** (Country Rapporteur), noting that births on outlying islands were registered by an official who visited those islands, said that it would be interesting to learn how efficient that system was, how often such visits took place and whether birth registration could be carried out by officials who were permanently resident on the islands. It would also be helpful if the delegation would clarify whether children born to unmarried parents were registered at birth and why it had been considered necessary to provide in law for them to be reregistered after their parents married.

12. The Committee would like to know what measures were being taken to encourage children's participation in public life and promote their freedom of expression. Given that climate change posed a significant threat to low-lying island States such as Tonga, he wondered whether Tongan children were aware of the dangers posed by climate change, whether they had participated in the international school strike on climate change on 15 March 2019, whether the Government encouraged such forms of protest and what steps it would take to heighten children's awareness of issues related to climate change. The Committee would welcome information on the extent to which the Tongan media addressed issues surrounding children's rights. In that regard, it would be interesting to learn whether the Government provided children with a platform, such as a web page, on which they could express their views on their rights and on public affairs in general.

13. Despite the fact that corporal punishment was prohibited in law, reports from alternative sources indicated that children continued to be whipped in schools. He wished to know what steps were being taken to enforce the ban on corporal punishment. He would also like to hear what measures were being taken to enforce laws aimed at tackling child abuse, which was reported to be a significant problem in Tonga, what resources had been allocated to ensure the implementation of such laws, whether any community-based programmes had been established to tackle child abuse, whether activities were carried out in schools to raise children's awareness of the problem and whether community groups and church leaders participated in efforts to combat child abuse and its root causes. It would be useful to receive information on the cases handled by the Police Domestic Violence Unit, including those in which perpetrators of child abuse had been prosecuted. He wondered whether the unit employed experts who were specifically trained to deal with complaints from children and, if so, whether those persons were available to receive complaints at all times of the day or night. It would be interesting to know whether a national debate was being conducted on the abuse, neglect and sexual exploitation of children and whether a national strategy had been put in place to tackle the problem.

14. The Committee wished to know what steps were being made to review and repeal the legislation providing for the imposition of the death penalty on children aged between 15 and 18 years. In the light of information indicating that an unusually high number of children were killed or injured in traffic accidents, the Committee would be interested to learn what steps were being taken to tackle that problem. Lastly, the Committee would welcome information on what judicial, administrative or legislative measures were being taken to ensure that the best interests of the child were considered in all scenarios, including those in which children's interests conflicted with the interests of other family members or parties.

15. **Ms. Aldoseri** said that she wished to know whether any measures had been taken to prohibit all forms of discrimination against children, in particular girls, children with disabilities and children born to foreign and stateless fathers. Commending the consultations held with children during the development of the Tonga National Youth Strategy 2014–2019, she asked what had been done to ensure that such consultations became standard procedure. She also asked how the implementation of legal provisions on the best interests of the child was monitored.

16. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that it would be useful to know the rationale for reregistering children born out of wedlock once the parents had married and whether the Government had considered the psychological impact that such action could have on the child. She wondered how many children had been reregistered. She would also like to know what care services were in place for child victims of violence and what sanctions were imposed on perpetrators, in particular given that whipping was socially accepted as a form of punishment.

The meeting was suspended at 10.50 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.

17. **Ms. Mafi** (Tonga), replying to the questions about the harmonization of domestic legislation with the Convention, including regarding the definition of a child, said that the Government was currently considering adoption legislation and had undertaken a preliminary review of legislation on children in the justice system, with a view to developing a youth diversion scheme. The Government was also considering whether to establish a desk for monitoring the implementation of the Convention within the Attorney General's Office. With regard to the appointment of a human rights officer within the Ombudsman's Office, resources had been allocated for that purpose in the budget for the coming financial year, but she was unsure of whether the officer would deal specifically with issues relating to children's rights.

18. In 2017, public consultations had been held on whether to increase the legal age of marriage, but only the population on the main island had been consulted thus far; no policy changes would be made until the communities on the outer islands could be polled. Although no steps had yet been taken to raise the age of criminal responsibility, it was anticipated that the issue would be addressed during the development of the youth diversion scheme.

19. With regard to the decentralization of birth registration, although the Ministry of Justice already had some offices on the outer islands at which births could be registered, the Government recognized that more needed to be done to facilitate birth registration on the

most outlying islands. To that end, it was currently running a birth registration amnesty programme in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and had deployed teams to the outer islands. All illegitimate children must be registered at birth. Where the parents later chose to marry, the child was reregistered so as to legitimize the birth and thereby enable the child to enjoy rights available only to legitimate children, such as land rights.

20. While the Education Act expressly prohibited the use of corporal punishment only in schools, the Family Protection Act 2013 prohibited the use of corporal punishment in the family setting and defined unreasonable corporal punishment as domestic violence, an offence which could be prosecuted and penalized. As the courts had placed a de facto moratorium on whipping and the death penalty, no specific steps had been taken to harmonize the relevant national legislation with the Convention. Unfortunately, the Police Domestic Violence Unit did not have a dedicated officer for cases involving children. Although there were no government services for child victims of violence, a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provided care and rehabilitation. There was currently no national debate on matters relating to the sexual exploitation of children, although cases continued to come before the courts, and the punishments imposed reflected the seriousness of the offence and the importance that the courts placed on the protection of children. No specific measures had been taken to prohibit discrimination against children.

21. **Mr. Nelson** asked whether the Government had considered criminalizing the rape of boys and whether steps had been taken to address the gender inequality in legislation governing landownership and inheritance rights for children.

22. **Ms. Khazova** said that the use of the term "illegitimate" to describe children born out of wedlock was humiliating and discriminating. She wished to know whether the Government would consider replacing it in national legislation with neutral wording.

23. **Ms. Aldoseri** said that the Committee would strongly recommend that the State party replace all references to "illegitimate children" with the term "children of unmarried parents". Although the State party was a regional leader in its data-collection practices, the data collected were not fully disaggregated. Did the Government have plans to establish a mechanism to ensure that data on all aspects of children's lives were collected?

24. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that she wished to know whether the Government was doing anything to educate children and teachers about the problem of violence against children and to help children report incidences of violence. Although she understood that the State party was not currently in a position to establish an independent human rights institution, she wondered whether it would be prepared to create a department for handling children's complaints within the Ombudsman's Office.

25. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that urgent action was needed to raise the legal age of marriage. She wondered whether specialist health care was available for child victims of violence. With regard to the reregistration of children born to unmarried parents, what was done with the original birth certificate and had the Government considered changing the system to allow children to be registered irrespective of the marital status of the parents?

26. **Ms. Sidikou** said that she wished to know whether the law would be amended to recognize male victims of rape and to grant girls and children born out of wedlock the same property inheritance rights as children born to married parents. She wondered what was being done to guarantee that the best interests of the child took precedence over family and community interests in all decisions relevant to the child and to ensure that the death penalty was not applied to children. Lastly, it would be useful to know how the Tonga National Youth Congress worked and what steps were being taken to increase child participation in family life and the wider community.

27. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** said that he would like further explanation of why no specific measures had been adopted to end corporal punishment of children. He would be interested in hearing the delegation's thoughts on what would be needed in order to bring about tangible progress in that regard.

28. **Ms. Mafi** (Tonga) said that she was unsure of whether anything was being done to address gender discrimination in the legal provisions on rape. With regard to land rights,

although girls could not inherit land, they could lease it. The Committee's useful recommendations regarding the term "illegitimate" would be taken into account in the ongoing discussions on the revision of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act. The Government was working to remove any mention of legitimacy or illegitimacy from birth certificates, although such information would be retained on file at the birth registry office, as it might be required for purposes such as land inheritance. Once a child had been reregistered, the new birth certificate superseded the original. The Government would do its best to address the need for swift action to raise the legal age of marriage.

29. With the support of the Regional Rights Resource Team of the Pacific Community, the Government had established the Family Protection Legal Aid Centre to provide legal aid services for cases that fell under the Family Protection Act 2013, which included a free hotline for child victims of domestic violence. Although there were no care and rehabilitation services for children in conflict with the law, the health sector provided specialist services for child victims of domestic violence, as mandated by the Family Protection Act 2013.

30. **Ms. Aldoseri** asked whether the helpline in existence was intended for victims of domestic violence only.

31. **Ms. Mafi** (Tonga) confirmed that it was.

32. **Mr. Fisi'iahi** (Tonga) said that the Tonga Lifeline had been available in the 1990s, but had run out of funding and ceased operating until it had received support from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Ministry also provided funding for the Women and Children's Crisis Centre, which offered a free helpline that was available to children 24 hours a day. The Free Wesleyan Church also provided a helpline operated by two qualified counsellors, and several NGOs offered helplines as well. The Women and Children's Crisis Centre conducted a weekly radio talkback on the national radio station of Tonga, where children could express their views and raise concerns.

33. A newly established Youth Division within the Ministry of Internal Affairs addressed youth-related issues. While a national youth strategy had been in place since 2007, it had become increasingly apparent that a national youth policy was needed to ensure the provision of better services for youth. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had provided funding for an expert to undertake public consultations on a youth policy, which were now in their final stages. Once the consultations had been concluded, the policy would be developed and then implemented as soon as it had been approved by the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Cabinet. The Ministry defined "youth" as persons between the ages of 15 and 34 who were single, had no children and were still living at home.

34. Tonga welcomed the funding it received from development partners. However, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had a long-term plan for increasing government funding for the implementation of programmes for youth in the event that donor funding was withdrawn. The Ministry monitored the funding provided to youth groups to ensure that investment projects were in fact generating income for those groups and were thus self-sustaining.

35. The Tonga National Youth Congress had been working hard to encourage and empower children and young people to express their views and concerns. Almost every village and district had local councils, where youth could participate as members. Youth were also encouraged to participate in decision-making through the Tonga National Youth Parliament. Youth leaders who participated in the Parliament were exposed to decision-making at the highest level and, once they had returned to their villages, would encourage other youth to freely express their views. Youth were also often represented at church conferences and high-level meetings.

36. The Women's Affairs Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs provided services aimed at protecting and providing assistance to child victims of domestic violence. The Ministry provided funding to various NGOs, including the Women and Children's Crisis Centre, which operated safe houses for women and child victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Three safe houses had been established in the previous three years. In 2017, the safe houses had housed 22 children aged 0 to 15; in 2018, 14 children; and as of May 2019, 39 children, including 4 girls who had been disowned by their families for getting

pregnant. Children living at the safe houses were offered counselling provided by trained counsellors and social workers. The Ministry of Internal Affairs had asked the safe houses to be more selective when taking in children to ensure that they housed only children who were being abused, not children who had simply run away from home.

37. The Ministry of Internal Affairs was committed to leaving no one behind and provided funding to enable children with disabilities to enrol in school and participate in sports. A project entitled Skills and Education for Tonga covered the school fees of children from poor households and provided their families with a stipend. The project also provided retraining for members of the population who were unable to find employment, and it sought to ensure that children with disabilities, children from troubled backgrounds and children who had never been enrolled in education attended school and were able to upgrade their skills in order to improve their future employability.

38. **Ms. Aldoseri** said that she would like to receive a clear answer on whether the rape of boys was criminalized. If a boy was raped, would the perpetrator be punished and the victim provided with care and rehabilitation?

39. **Ms. Mafi** (Tonga) said that while the rape of boys was not criminalized in Tonga, provisions relating to sodomy existed in the national legislation and could be applied in cases involving the rape of a boy. She did not have any information on whether care or rehabilitation was provided to boy victims of rape.

40. **Ms. 'Esau** (Tonga) said that the Education Act 2013 included provisions relating to early childhood education and inclusive education for children with disabilities. There were just under 100 early childhood education centres in Tonga, most of which were run by NGOs, private companies and churches. The Government had recently established the first public early childhood centre in the eastern district of the main island. It was staffed by teachers who had been trained in early childhood education.

41. Corporal punishment was prohibited under the Education Act 2013. A teacher or principal who violated that prohibition would be brought before a school disciplinary committee. In the event of a serious breach of the Public Service Code of Conduct, the teacher would have a hearing before the Public Service Commission and would be charged accordingly.

42. In February 2018, Tonga had been devastated by cyclone Gita, which had damaged many schools and resulted in children attending classes in tents for more than six months. On a positive note, the devastation of the cyclone and its impact on schools and homes had raised children's awareness of climate change, and students had subsequently been involved in the development of reading resources on the impact of climate change, which had been incorporated into the curriculum.

43. **Mr. Fisi'iahi** (Tonga) said that the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change was holding ongoing public consultations in villages in order to raise awareness, including among children, of the effects of climate change. The Government had prohibited burning rubbish in homes, a measure that would have a direct effect on children, as they were often tasked with collecting and burning rubbish. With a view to reducing the high number of child fatalities from car accidents, a bill requiring the use of seatbelts had been submitted to the parliament, but it had not been adopted. The Ministry of Infrastructure would nevertheless try again to push such legislation through parliament, as it was committed to establishing regulations that made the use of seatbelts and car seats mandatory.

44. **Ms. Aldoseri** said that she wished to know whether the school curriculum included a plan for evacuation in the event of natural disasters and, if so, whether any drills were carried out. She would be interested in hearing to what extent schools were accessible after such disasters.

45. **Mr. Nelson** said that he wondered whether awareness-raising campaigns had been conducted to improve road safety and discourage unsafe practices. He would welcome assurances from members of the delegation that they would push for the enactment of the law reforms in the various areas highlighted by the Committee.

46. **Ms. Winter** asked why girls would risk running away from home and seek refuge in a safe house when they had not been mistreated or threatened.
47. **Ms. Aldoseri** said that she would be grateful for an answer to her question regarding disaggregation of data.
48. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she would appreciate clarification as to why Tongan children were responsible for waste disposal. Were public waste disposal services not available?
49. **Ms. 'Esau** (Tonga) said that an evacuation plan was included as part of the school curriculum, and all schools and government bodies carried out evacuation drills. It was considered important to ensure that children understood evacuation procedures and their importance. Schools had traditionally been used as shelters for evacuees, but following Tropical Cyclone Gita the Government had identified additional safe places for evacuation, including churches and government buildings, since many schools had not been accessible. UNICEF had supplied tents to be used as schools, and children had been able to return to their classes a week after the cyclone had struck. She was pleased to report that studying in tents for periods of up to 10 months had not affected children's examination results at any level.
50. **Mr. Fisi'iahi** (Tonga) said that, while safe houses were open to all, they were intended for girls and boys who were vulnerable to abuse. The issue of runaway children was a growing concern. Such children often came from good, stable families, but left of their own accord to live with other children away from their families and subsequently sought shelter at safe houses. Given the limited resources available, safe houses were encouraged to return runaway children to their families.
51. Waste collection services operated by the Waste Management Authority had been started relatively recently. The service was provided at a cost that many families could not afford, however, which meant that they burned rubbish at home. Historically, it had been common practice for children to assist parents in disposing of rubbish in that manner. However, restrictions were now in place and families who burned rubbish could face a fine. Awareness-raising activities were being conducted to dissuade families from burning their household waste.
52. **Ms. 'Esau** (Tonga) said that each ministry collected data according to its needs, meaning that data was often fragmented. The Statistics Department was developing a standardized method of data collection in line with international standards as part of the Tonga Strategy for the Development of Statistics. The police conducted regular television and radio campaigns to raise awareness of road safety. The courts took the best interests of the child into consideration, particularly in adoption and child custody cases. Children deemed to be at risk could be removed from their parents or guardians. She wished to assure Mr. Nelson that the Ministry of Justice would work to implement the Committee's recommendations.
53. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi**, noting the emphasis placed on the role of the extended family and neighbours in child-rearing in Tongan society, said that she would like to know what had been done to encourage parents to assume shared responsibility for the care of children. While the placement of children without parents into the care of the extended family was laudable, she was concerned about potential risk of exploitation or abuse. She wondered whether any monitoring or supervision was carried out by the social services or other authorities in such cases. She would be interested to know what progress had been made with regard to the draft law to formalize adoption and whether the State party intended to ratify the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption and the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.
54. The State party report indicated that children were being placed in hospital mental health units (CRC/C/TON/1, para. 316); she would like to know how many children had been placed in such units, why they had been admitted and what was being done to provide them with care and rehabilitation. She wondered what measures were taken with respect to the development and care of children who lived with their mothers in prison. It would be helpful

to know how births in prison were registered and, in particular, whether the birth certificate indicated that the child had been born in a prison.

55. **Ms. Aldoseri** said that she would be interested to hear whether any data, disaggregated by type of disability, were available on children with disabilities. She would appreciate clarification of a statement in the State party report indicating that a large number of children with disabilities were believed to be “invisible” (CRC/C/TON/1, para. 354). Did those children have birth certificates? She wished to know how many children were in inclusive education and would appreciate further information on the two special schools for children with disabilities. It would be useful to know what medical procedures existed for the early diagnosis of disabilities, what referral programmes were in place for children with disabilities, and what support was provided to the families of such children. She would appreciate an explanation of the obstacles preventing the State party from ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

56. She wondered whether any statistics were available on exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months after birth, what steps the State party was taking to encourage exclusive breastfeeding and whether there were any baby-friendly hospitals in the country. She would also be interested to learn what measures were in place to ensure that working mothers were able to breastfeed their children. In addition, she wished to know whether any studies had been conducted to determine the root causes of suicide among children and whether any psychological counselling services had been made available to tackle the issue. With regard to environmental health, the delegation might wish to comment on reports that the Government allowed nuclear waste to be disposed of in Tonga.

57. It would be helpful to know how the law on compulsory education was enforced, given the significant percentage of children not enrolled in school. She wondered whether there were any data on school enrolment disaggregated by place of residence and disability, and whether any mapping had been carried out to determine the extent of the problem of non-attendance and its causes. Was cost a factor? Was primary school free of charge by law? She would be interested to learn what measures had been introduced to promote early childhood education and development, since few children attended preschool. It would also be useful to have information on day-care centres for young children. She would be grateful, as well, for information on the human rights curriculum in schools.

58. She wondered what steps had been taken to ensure the safety and security of children playing at public parks throughout the country. Lastly, she invited the delegation to give examples of recreational activities available to children other than sport.

59. **Mr. Nelson** said that he would welcome information on the availability and quality of primary health care on islands other than Tongatapu. He would also like to know whether health-care staff were given adequate training and whether there were sufficient numbers of health-care workers. It would be useful to know whether any initiatives had been undertaken to regulate the practice of the large number of traditional healers in the country.

60. He would be grateful if the delegation would comment on the high infant and under-5 mortality rates and explain what measures were being taken to address the issue. He would also be interested to hear what steps had been taken to increase vaccination rates, especially on the outlying islands and in rural areas on the main islands. He wondered whether the National Non-Communicable Diseases Strategy included a specific focus on children. For example, were there policies to promote healthy eating in schools by prohibiting junk food and sugary drinks and by raising awareness among children of the importance of diet in combating non-communicable diseases? The delegation might wish to elaborate on the measures adopted in schools to tackle smoking and alcohol consumption among young people.

61. He wished to know the status of the Employment Relations Bill 2013 and wondered whether any laws prohibiting child labour were currently in place. For example, had the prohibition on engagement in work included in the Hazardous Child Labour List been adopted? It would be useful to know how the Government intended to address the issue, alluded to in the State party report (CRC/C/TON/1, para. 504), of young children selling snacks during school hours and at night. A long-term strategy was required to assist the families of such children and thereby tackle the root causes of the problem.

62. He would like to hear whether the State party planned to amend the Criminal Offences Act to cover sexual commercial exploitation of children and teenage prostitution and when it intended to introduce laws criminalizing the abduction, sale and trafficking of children. Was the Government considering ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography? Lastly, he wondered what action would be taken to overcome deficiencies with regard to juvenile justice and what interim provisions would be made while the relevant legislation was pending.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.