



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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

### Summary record of the 2866th meeting\*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 24 January 2025, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Skelton

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Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

*Seventh periodic report of Ecuador (continued)*

\* No summary record was issued for the 2865th meeting.

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

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

*Seventh periodic report of Ecuador (continued)* (CRC/C/ECU/7;  
CRC/C/ECU/QPR/7)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Ecuador joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Ecuador** said that the protection of human rights, including the rights of children and adolescents, was a cross-cutting principle in all national legislation and that duly ratified international instruments were directly applicable. Manuals, protocols, guidelines and training programmes that emphasized fundamental democratic principles and the free exercise of human rights had been adopted to guide the work of military and law enforcement personnel. In 2024, around 38,000 military officers and 57,000 police officers had received training on human rights, including the legitimate use of force and international humanitarian law. The National Police and the armed forces had internal investigation mechanisms, and in 2024 the Ministry of the Interior had begun monitoring police and military conduct and respect for human rights by compiling and analysing data on their activities.
3. **A representative of Ecuador** said that, since violence in school settings had multiple causes, a coordinated, cross-sectoral response was required. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education worked closely with other ministries to prevent such violence. With the Ministry of the Interior, for example, it had adopted the Safe and Protective Educational Communities Programme, under which measures to promote students' well-being, comprehensive development and constructive use of free time, build their social and emotional skills and strengthen the social fabric were being taken in schools in particularly vulnerable areas, mostly in the Provinces of Esmeraldas, Guayas, Los Ríos and Manabí. With the Ministry of Culture, meanwhile, it organized educational concerts and dance workshops.
4. **A representative of Ecuador** said that a cross-sectoral policy had been adopted to address adolescent pregnancy. Specific action being taken included the establishment of clubs and leadership schools for teenagers and the roll-out of teacher training with an emphasis on sexual and reproductive health. Additionally, the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion had established eight youth centres meant for all family members, not just the younger ones.
5. The Ministry of Education had made curricular adjustments to accommodate the needs of adolescent mothers, and online schooling was an option for those wishing to complete their education. The support available placed an emphasis on the development of life plans that helped young mothers to identify the possibilities open to them. Action to promote sexual and reproductive health awareness targeted boys and young men as much as girls, and adolescent-friendly advice services were available in more than 1,500 primary healthcare facilities as well as in schools; the aim was to promote informed decision-making and shared responsibility between men and women. Marriage under the age of 18 was prohibited under article 83 of the Civil Code.
6. The right to terminate a pregnancy resulting from rape was protected in the Organic Act on the Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy for Girls, Adolescents and Women in Cases of Rape, adopted in 2022. The Ministry of Health had introduced a protocol to ensure proper application of the Act by all State agencies. Work to raise awareness of the protocol, on which more than 5,000 healthcare professionals had received training, was ongoing. The Ministry of Health ensured that the Attorney General's Office was informed whenever a victim of rape decided to terminate a pregnancy, and the two institutions worked together to ensure that the decision was made voluntarily, that protocols for the collection of evidence were respected and that all relevant reporting formalities were completed. Biological samples could be collected for use as evidence only with the victim's consent, and no refusal to give such consent could be invoked as grounds to deny access to justice. The informed consent of the pregnant woman or girl was required for all terminations of pregnancy.
7. In application of the National Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children and Adolescents and the Promotion of Positive Parenting and the Safe and Protective

Educational Communities Programme, the authorities were working to update and enforce protocols and pathways for addressing violence in educational settings. Policies to guarantee recourse and reparation for child victims of sexual violence and abuse that prioritized access to psychosocial counselling, rehabilitation, compensation and guarantees of non-repetition were also in place. As of 2024, more than 33,000 teachers had received training on comprehensive sex education and the elimination of sexual violence in schools. The Public Defender Service had a key role in addressing violence, including gender-based violence, offering free legal assistance and representation to all persons in need. The support available, which was multidisciplinary in nature, was designed to prevent revictimization.

8. **A representative of Ecuador** said that article 46 of the Constitution of Ecuador set forth nine obligations of the State in respect of children and adolescents and that those obligations underpinned all plans, programmes and policies. The Cabinet Committee for Social Affairs, established in 2023 and composed of representatives of seven ministries and three ministerial-level secretariats, was responsible for designing and implementing social policies that ensured compliance with the nine obligations. The greater coordination that its existence ensured was already bearing fruit.

9. A second reading of the draft code on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents was currently under way. However, pending the adoption of the code, the rights of children and adolescents were directly protected and immediately enforceable in application of article 11 (3) of the Constitution; concerns that the rights of the child were not comprehensively protected in the absence of a dedicated law were thus misplaced. Reports that the budget for programmes and services for children and adolescents had fallen drastically since the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic were also inaccurate. In fact, that budget had increased from \$188 million in 2021 to \$426 million in 2025. In the same period, there had also been a 32 per cent rise in the education budget.

10. The social registry unit was also being allocated increased resources, which would enable it to identify poverty and extreme poverty in the country with greater precision. According to the National Statistics and Census Institute, just under a quarter of Ecuadorians were living in poverty in 2024. A new social survey was due to be conducted in 2025, and the results would be used to identify new families in social need and target benefits accordingly. In some cases, however, benefits were disbursed directly and immediately to families in need, even if they had not yet been registered by the unit.

11. **A representative of Ecuador** said that the right to comprehensive healthcare and treatment was guaranteed under article 363 of the Constitution. Consequently, any child born with HIV was guaranteed free treatment and follow-up care as well as breast-milk substitutes for the first eight months of his or her life, and all HIV-positive children and adolescents received antiretroviral treatment. Universal prenatal screening and advice programmes, prophylactic treatment and planned caesareans were offered to prevent mother-to-child transmission.

12. Strategies for preventing tobacco and alcohol consumption among adolescents centred on raising awareness of the risk while ensuring the availability of appropriate facilities where young persons could spend their free time. As of 2024, 6,442 schools had been made smoke-free. A comprehensive strategy for preventing drug abuse that addressed the socioeconomic and mental health factors of addiction and would improve the coverage and quality of mental health services nationwide, promoting a family- and community-based approach, was in the development stages. Additionally, the Ministry of Education had rolled out a comprehensive drug use prevention plan in over 200 schools, psychologists had been made available to assist children with mental health problems and those with alcohol or drug use issues, and mental health services were provided at all three levels of healthcare.

13. The Organic Act on Mental Health, adopted in 2024, emphasized the importance of community-based care and established diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration measures. Work to optimize mental health policies by taking a holistic, cross-sector approach would continue. The annual suicide rate in Ecuador had not risen significantly in recent years; there had been 6.73 suicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2024, up from 6.44 in 2015.

14. Breastfeeding was encouraged and enabled by support groups that operated from public sector facilities; more than 1,500 primary care facilities and nearly 100 hospitals had active groups. Under new regulations, all public and private sector workplaces were required to have dedicated breastfeeding rooms; around 380 such facilities had received State certification. There were also nine human milk banks nationwide. According to the National Statistics and Census Institute, 53 per cent of new mothers breastfed their infants, up from 51 per cent previously.

15. The National Immunization Programme followed the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization and the National Immunization Committee. For children, the schedule included the Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG), human papillomavirus, pentavalent, pneumococcal, hepatitis B, polio and yellow fever vaccines. According to recent data, 96.5 per cent of children aged between 12 and 24 months had had two doses of the rotavirus vaccine and 93.4 per cent had had three doses of the pneumococcal vaccine. Immunization was voluntary and free of charge.

16. In 2022, guidelines had been issued for vaccinations against COVID-19, which were now included in the regular vaccination schedule. In 2025, the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine would be updated to include the most prevalent strains of the disease, and a hexavalent vaccine for protection from poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B and haemophilus influenzae type B would be introduced.

17. Action had been taken to increase vaccination coverage in hard-to-reach areas, with a particular focus on Indigenous communities. In 2025, a campaign to promote vaccination would be rolled out in the mass media and on social media platforms.

18. Efforts were being made to improve access to clean water and reduce the prevalence of diarrhoea and E. coli infections. The Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of the Environment and the decentralized autonomous governments were working together to help households move away from the use of dirt floors and wood-burning stoves, which contributed to respiratory illness among children. The Ministry of Health had engaged a team of community health wardens to provide direct support to communities and ensure that they could obtain the health services they required.

19. **A representative of Ecuador** said that there were 2,087 children living in 86 residential care centres. The Government had adopted comprehensive measures to ensure that children in such centres had an adequate standard of living and was seeking ways to expand the use of family-based alternative care settings. A total of 2,257 children were receiving support through a programme designed to strengthen family ties and avoid institutionalization. As part of the Host Cities initiative, 12,969 children were receiving specialist protection services. In urgent situations involving violence, the Emergency Care and Protection Service stepped in to place children in family-like settings or children's homes. There were currently 541 children in such placements.

20. In the first instance, administrative procedures relating to vulnerable children were the responsibility of the rights protection boards of the decentralized autonomous governments. The boards ordered protection measures that were then approved by a competent judge. The Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion monitored the services that were provided. The child protection system, which had a budget of \$19.5 million, was composed of 368 offices around the country. An additional three foster centres had recently been opened, and another three would open in 2025. Placement in residential care was a measure of last resort.

21. Work was being done to ensure that judges and members of rights protection boards received appropriate training in the application of an intercultural approach. To date, 2,287 justice and administration officials and 1,462 protection and fostering officials had received such training.

22. The Council for Intergenerational Equality, which was part of the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, was responsible for ensuring that all public policies were informed by an intergenerational approach. In the light of the Committee's concern, expressed in its previous concluding observations ([CRC/C/ECU/CO/5-6](#), para. 4), that the intergenerational approach might affect the implementation of the Convention, new units

focused on child protection had been set up within the Council, and the Office of the Under-Secretary for Comprehensive Child Development had been created within the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion. There were also 44 children's advisory councils.

23. The Emergency Care and Protection Service had been reorganized in 2024; it currently had a particular focus on child migrants and child victims of violence. Work had been done to ensure that the activities of the 11 new units set up to serve as the first point of contact for children requiring protection were aligned with the Convention.

24. The Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion had issued a guide to family reintegration that had transformed the guidelines and processes in place to support families and avoid institutionalization. Ecuador also had two specialized units for child victims of trafficking in persons. Since 2021, 2,238 children had been helped to return to their families.

25. Robust efforts were under way to speed up the adoption process. The nine adoption units had been expanded, and the authorities were working closely with children's judges to expedite the issuance of recommendations. Potential adoptive families could now be registered immediately, rather than having to wait up to three months, and the initial interview was conducted within two weeks of registration. Families then completed four weeks of training and underwent a social evaluation. Once a child had been placed with an adoptive family, the adoption services provided them with support for two years, following which the adoption was formalized by the courts. In 2024, 104 children had been adopted, 8 of them through international adoptions; a further 178 children were awaiting an adoptive family.

26. A number of inter-agency meetings had taken place in 2024 with a view to building an alternative care system and ensuring that children were recognized as rights holders in their own right.

27. **A representative of Ecuador**, noting that the Constitution enshrined the right of everyone, including children, to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, said that the Inter-Agency Committee on Climate Change had very recently approved his country's nationally determined contribution for the period 2026–2035; for the first time, the determination of the contribution had drawn on an intergenerational approach. An intercultural approach intended to highlight the importance of the knowledge and skills of Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent and members of Montubio communities, including children, in tackling climate change had also been taken. The nationally determined contribution was child-sensitive, in recognition of children's particular vulnerability to climate change. It was intended to make essential social services more resilient in the face of climate-related disasters and cast children as empowered agents of change.

28. In 2019, an inter-agency board had been set up to design and implement a policy to promote and protect the rights of human rights defenders, environmental defenders and journalists. The board, which had identified relevant institutional competencies, had conducted an analysis of the situation with support from international partners, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. At the Third Conference of the Parties to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), held in April 2024, Ecuador had co-led the initiative to adopt an action plan on human rights defenders in environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean.

29. While there was no specific legislation on free, prior and informed consent and environmental consultations, in November 2023 the Constitutional Court had ordered that a law on the matter must be adopted and had issued mandatory standards that must be applied by judges in cases relating to the environment. The relevant bills were undergoing their first and second readings.

30. In addition to the efforts being made at the national level to address climate change, global action, including by the countries that were responsible for the majority of emissions, was required. The Government recognized that the decentralized system in Ecuador created specific challenges and was committed to improving funding and cooperation to address climate change.

31. **A representative of Ecuador** said that her country had a robust regulatory framework that guaranteed non-discrimination for children with disabilities and paved the way to

achieving a fairer and more accessible society for everyone. The National Agenda for the Equality of Persons with Disabilities reflected a commitment to building a barrier-free future and was supported by concrete action. In 2024, for example, 290 technical and strategic meetings had taken place to ensure better coordination of health, education and social development services for children with disabilities.

32. Inclusive education was a priority, and efforts were being made to identify and remove barriers to education. Capacity-building programmes had been introduced to improve the quality of services for children with disabilities, and training sessions had been delivered to 1,200 technical staff and 1,481 representatives of support networks for persons with disabilities. There were 44 caregivers' committees that provided emotional and technical support to persons caring for family members with disabilities, including children, and drafted annual action plans on the basis of the priorities identified in their local area. The work of the committees improved the lives of children with disabilities and empowered their families to take the lead in social inclusion.

33. The Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion coordinated childhood development initiatives – for which there was an annual budget of \$15 million – for 35,000 children with disabilities. It also operated the non-contributory Joaquín Gallegos Lara voucher scheme for caregivers and the disability pension, disbursing approximately \$24 million to 8,724 children with disabilities. In 2024, 10,860 children with disabilities had received support for the first time. In addition, the Ministry had designed strategies to prevent violence against children with disabilities.

34. The Ministry of Education had opened local inclusion units to help meet the educational needs of children with disabilities. During the 2023/24 academic year, 50,676 students with disabilities had been enrolled in education; 9,718 of them attended special schools.

35. In late 2024, more than 1,700 public officials who worked with children with disabilities had received disability awareness training. The aim had been to improve the health services provided to such children.

36. According to information from the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, between 2019 and 2022 a total of 228 children with a range of disabilities, including physical, intellectual, sensory and psychosocial disabilities, had benefited from family support, family custody and foster care services. In December 2022, 1,658 children and adolescents had been living in foster care. Expanding the coverage of programmes for children and adolescents with disabilities continued to be a priority, especially in rural and remote areas where needs were most pressing. Efforts must be redoubled to eliminate barriers to full inclusion and ensure that all children and adolescents with disabilities could fully enjoy their rights. It was essential to strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that policies and programmes met their stated objectives and had a tangible impact on the lives of children with disabilities and their families. The Ministry's integrated information system – an advanced monitoring and evaluation tool – would help in the construction of new programmes, plans and policies for the protection of children and adolescents with disabilities.

37. **Ms. Beloff** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that she wondered whether the worsening security situation and the public's mistaken view that adolescents were to blame would affect the adoption of the amendments to the Code on Children and Adolescents. She would be interested to know what measures would be taken to ensure that the debate on the proposed reforms was protected from calls for a tougher juvenile criminal policy caused by such misconceptions. The delegation might also comment on the reasons for the very high rate of deprivation of liberty of adolescents and explain what was being done to promote alternatives to detention for adolescents, particularly for minor offences.

38. **Ms. Todorova** (Country Task Force) said that she had not yet received responses to many of her questions. She had noted the response provided concerning the policies in place to prevent the unnecessary use of force during protests, particularly against children, but would appreciate specific information on the cases of excessive use of force during the protests in 2017 and 2022.

39. She wondered whether the Government had considered establishing a truth commission to follow up on the work of the parliamentary commission created in 2017 to investigate child sexual abuse by the Catholic clergy.

40. She would welcome further information on the implementation of inclusive education in practice. For example, it would be interesting to know what training and support was provided to teachers to prepare them to teach children with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities in an inclusive classroom and how schoolchildren were prepared to learn alongside classmates with disabilities.

41. Regarding alternative care, she wondered why the detailed information and statistics provided by the delegation had not been included in the State party's periodic report, which would have made them easier to process for the Committee. She would like to know more about the shelters for specialized protection and the arrangements that were made for alternative care.

42. **Mr. Mezmur** (Country Task Force) said that a number of organizations had warned that the declaration of a state of emergency gave rise to an increased risk of violations of the rights of children, including migrant children. He would therefore be interested to know how the Government was mitigating that risk and whether there were any plans to adopt a comprehensive strategy to prevent the recruitment and use of children by non-State armed groups and organized crime groups or introduce amendments to the Criminal Code to make the recruitment and use of children by such groups a separate crime. It would also be helpful to know what was being done to address concerns about the recruitment of children in detention centres by organized crime groups. On a separate point, he would also appreciate information on the reasons for the significant decline in vaccination coverage.

43. **Ms. Zara** (Country Task Force) said that she wished to know whether the hexavalent vaccine was administered to children, despite concerns about potential undesirable side effects, and whether steps were being taken to review the vaccine protocol with WHO.

44. **Ms. Correa** said that, according to statistics from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), homicide was the leading cause of death among children aged between 5 and 17, and the number of homicides of children under the age of 17 had increased by 800 per cent between 2021 and 2023. Furthermore, suicide was reportedly the leading cause of death among girls aged between 12 and 17, who experienced high levels of sexual violence. In view of those reports, she would be interested to hear about the strategies being implemented or considered to address violence against children. Although the national public security strategy contained a separate section on children and adolescents, there did not appear to be a comprehensive policy in practice to address the structural violence faced by children and adolescents. She would welcome clarification of the measures the Government planned to take to rescue the estimated 78,000 children who had been taken out of school by organized crime gangs.

45. **Mr. Pedernera Reyna**, welcoming the introduction of the pneumococcal vaccine, said that he would like to know whether its roll-out had already been scheduled. He also wished to know whether an incomplete polio vaccine schedule continued to be administered, whether children's parents were informed of the impact of receiving an incomplete schedule and what would be done to ensure that the full schedule was available. He would be interested to know more about the coverage of the sexual and reproductive health services described by the delegation, particularly in the light of reports that the Ombudsman's Office had recently filed an action against the Ministry of Education over a lack of coverage in the Galápagos Islands. With regard to children without a family environment, it would be useful to know whether the emergency care and protection service that would benefit some 500 children had already been launched and, if not, when it would be. Lastly, he would be interested to hear what the State party intended to do to address the troubling erosion of the specificity of the juvenile justice system, which now had many of the same shortcomings as the adult system.

46. **Ms. Aho** said that she would like to know why children vaccinated in the public and private systems did not receive the same vaccines; in the case of the polio vaccine, for example, those in the private system received the live vaccine, while those in the public system received the inactivated one. She also wished to know when the State party planned to update the national vaccination schedule. The delegation might, in addition, explain what

measures were being taken to ensure that all children were registered and had a birth certificate.

47. **Mr. Van Keirsbilck** said that it would be interesting to know whether girls could have an abortion without having to obtain their parents' consent. It would be helpful to learn, too, to what extent the national preventive mechanism adopted a specific approach to monitoring the detention of children. He would also like to know whether there had been any investigation into the international adoptions that had clearly been illegal and whether the children thus adopted could trace their origins.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.55 p.m. and resumed at 5.15 p.m.*

48. **A representative of Ecuador** said that 7,822 of the 16,140 educational institutions run by the Ministry of Education guaranteed the right to education for students with disabilities. Inclusion support units advised teachers and other education professionals as well as families on how to support the teaching and learning process. Nearly 127,000 teachers had taken one of the six courses available on the continuous education platform on how to ensure the effective inclusion of children with disabilities in the classroom. In December 2024, new ministerial instructions had been issued on the educational care of students on the autism spectrum, the use of psychoeducational evaluations and the assessment of learning for persons with specific educational needs, whether associated with disability or not. In addition, there were various policy instruments already in place, including the national bilingual educational model for persons with hearing impairments.

49. The results of the 2022/23 national assessment of learning had revealed a mixed picture in terms of the academic understanding of Ecuadorian students and had highlighted the need to take action to strengthen the education of girls and adolescents. As a result, curricular adaptations were made with a view to reducing educational gaps and encouraging a return to school for children who had dropped out. The "Learn on Time" national plan, which was designed for students with gaps in their education, was benefiting a total of 1,256,000 children and adolescents. The Ministry of Education had launched the "We Take Care of You" national plan in August 2024 to prevent children and adolescents from dropping out of school and to encourage those who had dropped out to return; the focus was on the social and emotional well-being of the students, responsibility-sharing by schools and parents and guardians and the improvement of educational infrastructure. The first report on the implementation of the plan was due in February 2025.

50. The standard of educational infrastructure varied: approximately 70 per cent of schools were in functional condition, 11 per cent were in good condition, 17 per cent were in unsatisfactory condition and less than 2 per cent were in poor condition. Priority was being given to identifying the needs of the schools in poor condition and carrying out the necessary remedial works.

51. The Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion set aside a sizeable budget for the comprehensive development centres for children under the age of 3 in 6,871 communities and the "Growing with Our Children" programme, which benefited 98,562 families. In total, 466,717 children of preschool age benefited from those programmes. In 2023/24, a total of 18,563 children had benefited from the early childhood family support service, which supported the education of children aged 3 and 4 who were not enrolled in school for a variety of reasons, particularly in rural and remote areas.

52. Under the Criminal Code and a number of protocols, all public servants and educational staff had an obligation to report any offences committed in the education system, including acts of sexual violence, to the prosecutor's office. In 95 per cent of cases, a plan was drawn up for the support of victims of such offences and the restitution of their rights, which included referral for medical and psychological care. In accordance with the Organic Act on Intercultural Education, school bus drivers were not considered part of the educational community. However, their conduct was regulated under ministerial agreements, which established guidelines to ensure the safety of school transportation, including the requirement for prospective drivers to undergo a psychological evaluation as part of the recruitment process. If a driver subjected a child or adolescent to an act of violence, a report had to be made to the prosecutor's office and immediate protection measures had to be taken.



53. Statistics on violence against children and adolescents with disabilities were recorded in the sexual violence registration system and used by the authorities to develop policies and support measures that were tailored to that group's needs. The system automatically issued alerts to ensure that all cases were followed up. An action plan on the prevention of gender-based violence against girls and adolescent women with disabilities in the national education system was currently being formulated.

54. **A representative of Ecuador** said that his country was grappling with growing levels of violence, the increasing influence of organized criminal groups and terrorist acts that posed a threat to national security and sovereignty. A number of states of emergency had been declared in response to the serious unrest in prisons and the severe disturbances caused by the internal armed conflict. All decisions to impose a state of emergency were reviewed by the Constitutional Court, which, in some cases, had limited the scope of the restrictions put in place. With regard to the state of internal armed conflict declared in January 2024, the Court had recognized that armed groups with ties to international organized crime were competing for control over some sectors, leading to clashes that caused widespread harm. The Government's efforts to address the situation were guided by the need to ensure full respect for human rights, in particular those of children and adolescents. It recognized that its key responsibility was to guarantee a peaceful, safe, democratic and corruption-free society.

55. All foreign nationals in Ecuador enjoyed the same rights and access to services as Ecuadorian nationals. Discrimination against an individual on the basis of his or her migration status was prohibited under article 11 (2) of the Constitution. Pursuant to article 2 of the Organic Act on Human Mobility, all migrants in Ecuadorian territory, including children and adolescents, were entitled to the full range of rights recognized in the Constitution, national laws and the international instruments ratified by Ecuador. That article established, too, that the best interests of children and adolescents should be taken into account in all migration processes.

56. The Government followed a human rights-based policy when dealing with child migrants and refugees, treating them as a priority group and providing them with specialist care. The migration authorities cooperated actively with those responsible for children and adolescents in order to deliver services that met the highest international standards and helped ensure restitution for child migrants and refugees whose rights had been violated. A protocol for the comprehensive care of foreign migrant children and adolescents had been adopted in November 2022. Authorities caring for unaccompanied children and adolescents and those who had been separated from their legal guardians followed a special procedure, established in 2023, which also set out the steps to be taken when such children submitted a request for international protection. From 1 January 2021 to 23 January 2025, refugee status had been granted to 4,092 children and adolescents.

57. Between 2022 and 2024, the Government, in recognition of the important role that regularization played in reducing the risks faced by migrants, had run a regularization campaign through which more than 95,000 persons, including 1,200 accompanied and 899 unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents, had been issued visas. Such visas were valid for an initial two-year period, after which they could be renewed for a further two years. In the interest of preventing international child abduction, children who wished to obtain the visa had to be accompanied by both parents when submitting their application. Any parent who was unable to accompany his or her child was required to provide a power of attorney. Free legal representation was offered to single-parent families in order to help them obtain an exemption from that requirement. A protocol on support for unaccompanied foreign children and adolescents during the regularization process was currently being finalized.

58. Between 2016 and 2023, more than 19,000 persons had participated in awareness-raising sessions run as part of a campaign to tackle discrimination at the northern border. Training on that topic had also been provided to 150 officials from the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility had worked with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to develop a guide on migration-related rights and obligations, the aim of which was to eradicate discrimination and promote the inclusion of migrants by familiarizing officials with the reasons for which they left their countries and the contribution they could make to the host country. That

document also contained information on the specific difficulties faced by migrant children and adolescents. Another guide had been developed to foster the creation of more inclusive and diverse environments in schools, promote educational activities intended to combat discrimination and help improve the self-esteem and academic performance of migrant children and adolescents.

59. **A representative of Ecuador** said that the Ministry of the Interior had stepped up its efforts to combat trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. Steps taken to that end had included the creation of guides for the detection of cases, the decentralization of the national unit to combat trafficking in persons and the introduction of preventive checks at the main border crossings. In 2024, 40 per cent of the \$263,000 earmarked by the Government for anti-trafficking activities had gone towards protecting children and adolescents. The rest had been used to finance the operations of the national unit to combat trafficking in persons. Between 2023 and 2024, training on trafficking had been delivered to around 3,200 front-line public officials, such as migration personnel, members of the armed forces and health workers.

60. From January 2023 to August 2024, some 3,500 at-risk children and adolescents had been prevented from leaving the country. They had subsequently been referred to an inter-institutional coordination team in order to receive comprehensive support from health, education and human rights institutions. The Ministry of the Interior had worked with the Council of the Judiciary to bring disciplinary proceedings against five notaries public who had been involved in the falsification of documents and fingerprints and to implement stricter controls in that area. Paper yellow fever vaccination certificates had been replaced by a system based on a QR code, and training on the examination of documents had been provided to officials responsible for detecting cases of trafficking and protecting victims.

61. The Government gave priority to any constitutional or legal reforms that would enhance respect for the rights of children and adolescents. Complaints regarding potentially illegal international adoptions could be filed with the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, which functioned as the central adoption authority and worked with the relevant international bodies and the authorities of the other countries concerned. It also cooperated with bodies such as the Attorney General's Office to prevent illegal adoptions from occurring in the first place. A protocol had been established to help persons adopted nationally or internationally search for their birth families.

62. The Ministry of the Interior had taken steps to prevent a recurrence of the events that had taken place during the 2014 protests against the Government, which had included the illegal detention and torture of an adolescent. It had, for example, issued regulations on the legitimate, appropriate and proportionate use of force. Guidelines designed to protect the rights of citizens involved in protests, including children and adolescents, had also been developed. In 2022, the Ministry of the Interior and the National Police had supported the adoption of a law on the legitimate use of force and its implementing regulations. The National Police were gradually introducing human rights training programmes, which focused on the right of peaceful protest and the policing of assemblies with the potential to turn violent, and handbooks aimed at preventing human rights violations by police officers.

63. **A representative of Ecuador** said that responsibility for the administration of juvenile justice lay with the Council of the Judiciary. Efforts were being made to raise awareness of the need to increase the number of judges specializing in that area. Children became liable to prosecution when they turned 12.

64. The fundamental objective of the juvenile justice system was to provide adolescents in conflict with the law with the tools and support needed to prevent them from reoffending and to enable them to overcome the challenges they faced. To that end, juvenile justice officials could impose custodial or non-custodial measures. Pursuant to article 382 of the Code on Children and Adolescents, adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 could be held in a social rehabilitation and educational institution for no more than 8 years. The police records of adolescents who had been investigated for an offence or in respect of whom a social rehabilitation and educational measure had been ordered were kept confidential, and the case files of those who had been held in an institution were destroyed once the adolescents in question had served their time.

65. The country's 10 centres for adolescent offenders, which currently housed 451 adolescents, were organized in a way that sought to replicate family and community life as closely as possible. The adolescents, who slept in dormitories rather than cells, had access to outdoor spaces, therapeutic, recreational and educational activities, professional training workshops, kitchens and personal hygiene facilities. The centres' technical and legal staff received training from the Comprehensive Care Service for Adults Deprived of Liberty and Juvenile Offenders. Crime prevention was another important aspect of the centres' work; training in that area had been delivered to some 7,000 students and 500 parents of adolescent offenders. In the past five years, around 50 per cent of the adolescents in the centres had been placed in them for committing rape. That proportion had decreased in 2024 thanks to the introduction of a programme to raise awareness of the crimes of sexual abuse and rape among young people. There had been no deaths in the centres in 2024.

66. **A representative of Ecuador** said that girls did not require their parents' permission to have an abortion. A cash transfer was provided to all parents who registered their child within 45 days of his or her birth. The health authorities had spent a year conducting an epidemiological analysis of the acellular hexavalent vaccine, concluding that it was very effective and safe for use in infants. Efforts to introduce that vaccine, which provided protection against polio, were ongoing. From the second half of 2025, children immunized in public health facilities would receive the same vaccines as those treated in private medical establishments.

67. **Ms. Beloff** said that she wished to thank the delegation for its contribution to the constructive dialogue. While public discourse in Latin America tended to suggest that citizen security and human rights were competing priorities, the State party had managed to demonstrate that it was committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention despite the insecurity it faced. She was hopeful that the pledges made by the State party during the dialogue would translate into tangible action for the benefit of children and adolescents.

68. **A representative of Ecuador** said that she hoped that the dialogue would mark the beginning of joint efforts by her Government and the Committee to build a system that enhanced the protection of children and adolescents in Ecuador and elsewhere. The Government, which was committed to guaranteeing children's rights, was currently laying the groundwork for the swift implementation of the policies recommended by the Committee and civil society. More investment, stronger institutions and greater cooperation with civil society organizations were required to address the remaining challenges. Her Government paid full attention to the questions that such organizations had raised as part of the review of its efforts to implement the Convention. All the Committee's comments and suggestions had been taken on board by her delegation and would inform efforts to build a better future for all children and adolescents in Ecuador.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*