



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirty-sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 947th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Monday, 17 May 2004, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRPERSON declared open the thirty-sixth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
2. Ms. CONNORS (Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) announced that the Secretary-General had just appointed Ms. Louise Arbour as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. After serving as Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, Ms. Arbour had become a Justice of the Canadian Supreme Court, where she had been an ardent defender of children's interests. She would take up her new functions on 1 July 2004.
3. The Office of the High Commissioner was pursuing its efforts to implement the reforms outlined in the Secretary-General's report "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change". Pursuant to Action 2 in that report, it had, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, elaborated an inter-agency plan of action to improve the integration of human rights into the activities of United Nations agencies at the country level. In December 2003, that plan had been sent to all 147 United Nations country teams and a detailed three-year implementation strategy of which a key feature was the placement of a human rights adviser in each of those teams was expected to be finalized within the coming weeks. The Office had also designed a training programme for country teams of which the first phase would begin in 2004-2005; it had started preparing country profiles and was working on a concept paper defining the elements required in national protection systems.
4. With regard to Action 3 in the Secretary-General's report, the Office was finalizing draft guidelines for an expanded core document and proposals for harmonized reporting guidelines and methods of work. After presentation to the Committee for its consideration and comment, they would be submitted to the forthcoming third inter-Committee meeting. During the recent session of the Commission on Human Rights, several delegations had welcomed the inter-committee meetings as a means of increasing consistency and coherence in the treaty body system as well as of ensuring the circulation of information and thus the improvement of working methods within each of the participating bodies. Delegations had also welcomed the dialogues with States and measures to enter into dialogue with non-reporting States parties.
5. A workshop on strengthening the implementation of human rights treaty recommendations through the enhancement of national protection measures had been held in November 2003 and another had been held during the current month. The workshops, which were addressed to non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions and the media from States reporting to the treaty bodies, had been successful in increasing the involvement of national actors and the participation of civil society in the treaty bodies' work.
6. The first session of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families had been held in Geneva in March of the current year. The Committee had been established pursuant to the eponymous International Convention,

which had come into force in July 2003 but had so far only been ratified by 25 States. As the children of migrant workers were directly affected by their parents' situation, she hoped that the Committee would strongly encourage ratification of the Convention.

7. At its sixtieth session, the Commission on Human Rights had adopted a resolution on child abduction in Africa and, as every year, an omnibus resolution on the rights of the child. In that omnibus resolution, it had requested the Secretary-General to take note of the Committee's efforts to reform its methods of work and to study further the proposals that had been made, especially the suggestion of working in two parallel chambers. In its decision 2004/110, Commission had decided to appoint a special rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children.

8. Regrettably, the two-day workshop on its working methods that the Committee had planned to hold before the current session had had to be postponed for, inter alia, financial reasons. Every effort would be made to enable the workshop, a very important initiative, to take place and a number of donors had already been contacted to that end.

9. During the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, the independent expert appointed to lead the study on violence against children had addressed the Commission and taken part in several side events, including one in which children had participated and which had been built on the very interesting work on child participation, including training sessions, undertaken by Save the Children. The questionnaire for Governments in connection with the independent expert's study had been distributed in all United Nations languages in March of the current year. Activities relating to the study were well under way, particularly, since there was no provision for the study in the regular budget, the search for funding.

10. The Committee's heavy programme of activities for the current session already included meetings with a number of its partners. The Committee might also wish to discuss matters of mutual interest with the Committee against Torture, which was meeting concurrently with it.

11. Ms. SARDENBERG, in welcoming Ms. Arbour's appointment as High Commissioner for Human Rights, paid tribute to the memory of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, who had died in tragic circumstances in August 2003. She expressed confidence that the new High Commissioner would also be a resolute champion of human rights.

12. She welcomed the decision to assign a human rights adviser to each country team. The Committee had always stressed the importance of coordinating action to implement the recommendations made in the treaty bodies' concluding observations.

13. The decisions to prepare country human rights profiles and a concept paper defining a national human rights protection system were very constructive. The Committee's experience would be of help in drawing up those documents.

14. Given the initial scepticism regarding inter-committee meetings, the interest that a number of delegations had expressed in those meetings at the latest session of the Commission on Human Rights was gratifying. It would be helpful if the Committee could be given the document summarizing those delegations' statements.

15. Regarding the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Committee might wish to consider how it could coordinate its action with that of the committee responsible for monitoring application of that instrument.

16. Ms. KHATTAB said that the Committee should participate in organizing training sessions on the combating of violence against children and in seeking funding for the holding of such sessions in countries in need of them.

17. To her knowledge, no European Union country had yet ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, although those countries hosted large numbers of migrant workers. It would therefore be interesting to know what the Office of the High Commissioner had done to encourage those countries to ratify the Convention. The Committee too should consider what it could do to that effect.

18. Ms. CONNORS (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that she would invite a member of the Steering Committee of the Geneva Migration Group to tell the Committee what steps had been taken to encourage States which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention.

19. With respect to violence against children, her Office would ask Save the Children whether it could step up its training efforts, since the seminars organized by that non-governmental organization were extremely interesting. Thought should be given to ways of facilitating children's participation in those sessions, since it was children who had the most to say on the subject.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 1 of the provisional agenda) (CRC/C/138)

20. The agenda was adopted.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 3)

21. Mr. DAVID (Secretary of the Committee) said that the reports that had been received since the Committee's previous session were the initial report of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the second periodic reports of Azerbaijan, Hungary, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Ghana and Mauritius and the third periodic report of Peru. The total number of reports that had been received therefore stood at 278, comprising 181 initial reports, 86 second periodic reports and 11 third periodic reports. The Committee had so far considered 227 reports. There were 10 initial reports and 94 periodic reports still to be submitted.

22. The Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been ratified by 72 States. No reports concerning its application or the application of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts had been received since the Committee's previous session. In all, 20 initial reports were outstanding for the first of those protocols and 25 for the second.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.45 a.m.