



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 2164th meeting* (Chamber A)

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 17 January 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Aldoseri (Vice-Chair)

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* No summary records were issued for the 2162nd or 2163rd meetings.

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In the absence of Mr. Mezmur (Chair), Ms. Aldoseri (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties

Second periodic report of Barbados (CRC/C/BRB/2; CRC/C/BRB/Q/2 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Barbados took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados), introducing his country's second periodic report (CRC/C/BRB/2), said that the Government of Barbados had long regarded children as being worthy of care and protection and continued to fulfil its duty towards them by making substantial investments in and allocating significant resources to areas such as education, health and social care.

3. Despite its lack of natural resources, Barbados was proud to offer free education to children aged between 3 and 18 years, from the pre-primary to the secondary level. Education was compulsory for children aged between 5 and 16 years and was accessible to all. Successive Governments had consistently invested around 6 per cent of the country's gross domestic product in education.

4. Free pre-primary education was currently offered in 12 State schools. A new pre-primary facility had just been opened and four more schools were due to be built between 2017 and 2020. The Government was working with civil society organizations with a view to providing universal pre-primary education and to dispensing adequate training, including on special needs education, to all preschool teachers. Barbados had committed significant financial resources to providing early childhood care and education through day-care and pre-primary facilities in centres and schools. For over a decade, approximately 5 per cent of public expenditure had been allocated to pre-primary education.

5. In keeping with the Government's pledge to ensure that children's education was relevant to the country's national development goals, the range of subjects offered in secondary schools had been expanded. Secondary school students could now follow a comprehensive technical and vocational curriculum and acquire professional skills, which stood them in good stead for joining the labour market or becoming self-employed once they had left school. The Caribbean Vocational Qualification was a competency-based qualification that equipped students with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform a given job and that allowed them to access entry-level employment and employment opportunities in other countries of the Caribbean Community. In addition, a low-cost textbook loan scheme in secondary schools helped guarantee the availability of learning resources and had resulted in an estimated literacy rate of 98 per cent, which was one of the highest in the world.

6. The Government also attached great importance to children's health as a prerequisite for effective learning. The generally good state of health enjoyed by children in Barbados was attributable, inter alia, to the country's high immunization rate. The availability of free immunization explained the country's low infant mortality rate, as children no longer died from diseases such as polio, chronic malnutrition or stunted growth. As part of the Government's baby-friendly initiative, mothers were encouraged to breastfeed for at least six months. The State-run Queen Elizabeth Hospital and eight polyclinics provided a range of community health-care services, including paediatric outpatient care, outpatient care for ear, nose and throat problems and dental care. There was also a private hospital and many other private health-care facilities located across the island.

7. Children's health-care services were funded by the Government from the budget of US\$ 125 million set for the 2016/17 financial year. In an attempt to offset the impact of

non-communicable diseases on children and the increasing prevalence of childhood obesity, the Government continued to provide children with specially designed, nutritious meals through the School Meals Programme and encouraged them to be active from an early age.

8. The Government aimed to provide a comprehensive range of social services that responded to the care and protection needs of children and their family. Such services included advocacy and empowerment initiatives and counselling and alternative support services. The State was also responsible for placing children in foster care, registering and regulating private day-care facilities and awarding grants to childcare institutions. A total of 15 day-care facilities were currently operating in Barbados thanks to substantial government investment in that sector. The services provided by those facilities were highly subsidized, with parents or guardians required to pay only a small weekly fee. The Government also funded the seven residential care facilities that accommodated the 109 children who had been placed in the care of the State.

9. A mandatory reporting protocol for cases of child abuse would be submitted to the Cabinet for approval and subsequent implementation. The protocol was intended to assist the relevant agencies and social workers in preventing, reporting and managing cases of child abuse. The objectives of the protocol were to protect children from harm; to prevent child abuse and neglect; to promote cooperation and coordination among agencies in terms of their approach to prosecution and the treatment afforded to child victims, their family and the abuser; and to provide all persons directly involved in child protection with ongoing training. The police and other public sector workers were expected to be familiar with the protocol.

10. The Government recognized that children with disabilities often faced additional challenges, a reality which had prompted Barbados to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in February 2013. The Government was committed to adopting appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational and other measures to protect persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, pursuant to article 16 of that Convention. The National Disabilities Unit had a mandate to promote, facilitate and advocate for the advancement and empowerment of persons with disabilities with the aim of guaranteeing equal opportunities for social integration and community participation.

11. The issue of violence against children continued to be a source of great concern across Barbados. In 2016, the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act had been amended to include acts of child abuse as an act of domestic violence. The aim of the amended Act was to provide victims of child abuse with adequate protection and to impose stiff penalties on abusers.

12. The Government had undertaken a comprehensive review of all laws relating to women, children and their families and would shortly prioritize areas for reform in order to ensure greater conformity between domestic legislation and the relevant international instruments. Consideration had also been given to prevailing trends and international best practices in that connection. Broad consultations had been held with government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations and the public to gain a better understanding of the multisectoral implications of the proposed legislative amendments.

13. It was the Government's intention to address issues affecting children living in Barbados in a holistic manner, which, going forward, would enable it to fulfil its obligations under the Convention more effectively.

14. **Ms. Sandberg** (Country Rapporteur) asked whether the State party planned to ratify any of the three optional protocols to the Convention in the near future and whether it foresaw any impediments to the adoption of unified Children's Act. The delegation should also provide an overview of the other legislative reforms proposed as part of the

aforementioned review and indicate whether it intended to incorporate the provisions of the Convention into domestic law so that they could be invoked and applied directly.

15. Noting that the National Youth Policy only targeted persons aged between 15 and 29 years, which left children up to the age of 14 years unaccounted for, she asked whether the State party planned to introduce a comprehensive policy for children of all ages. She also wished to know which body had overall responsibility for coordinating efforts to implement the Convention and whether the body in question had the requisite authority to compel other entities to take action in that connection. It would also be helpful to receive additional information on the role and composition of the Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child.

16. She asked what steps had been taken to improve the existing system for collecting disaggregated data on children of all ages and whether the budgetary resources allocated to each of the social sectors prior to the global financial crisis had been maintained. She would also like to hear more about how budgetary allocations for children were tracked. She drew the delegation's attention to the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights (CRC/C/GC/19), which could prove useful in that connection.

17. Noting with concern that a specific unit for children had still not been set up within the Ombudsman's Office and that there was therefore no independent body to promote and protect the rights of the child, she asked when the State party planned to remedy that shortcoming. What status had the Ombudsman's Office been granted by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions? What was the composition of the newly formed National Human Rights Committee? Did it have a specific mandate to promote and protect children's rights? Was it competent to receive complaints from persons whose rights had been violated, including children?

18. She understood the general lack of knowledge about and respect for children's rights in Barbados to be largely attributable to the ineffectiveness of the awareness-raising efforts undertaken to date. She asked how the State party planned to remedy that situation. Did children learn about their rights at school?

19. The Committee was concerned that, although the minimum legal age for marriage was normally 18 years, children as young as 16 could marry with parental consent. She wondered whether the State party had considered doing away with that exception to prevent its abuse. She would also like to know whether girls continued to suffer gender-based discrimination in Barbadian society and, if so, what measures had been taken to eradicate that phenomenon.

20. She noted with regret that children who were not citizens or permanent residents of Barbados did not enjoy the same protection against discrimination as children who were, which could expose migrant children in particular to discrimination in access to health care and education. In addition, it appeared that migrant children were not entitled to free education.

21. Noting that mothers of children born out of wedlock had to submit an application for child maintenance to a magistrate's court, whereas mothers of children born from parents who were legally married or in another form of union had to apply to the Supreme Court, she enquired as to the differences between the proceedings before each of the courts.

22. She asked whether there were plans to mainstream the principle of the best interests of the child in all legislation concerning children as part of the ongoing legislative reform and how the best interests of the child were determined in court proceedings and in child protection cases. What issues were dealt with by the student councils operating in secondary schools? How often did the councils meet? Were the members of those councils

provided with any kind of training? Were the views expressed by students taken into account by school leaders? Lastly, she asked whether it was a legal requirement for children to be heard by the courts in cases that did not involve adoption or a criminal offence and whether judges received special training on hearing children.

23. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** (Country Rapporteur) asked for information on the current birth registration rate and the birth registration procedure in Barbados, and whether the service was provided free of charge to all parents, whether there were consequences for failing to register a birth by the established deadline and whether migrants encountered obstacles in registering the birth of their children.

24. He said the Committee remained concerned that both the Constitution and the Barbados Citizenship Act still contained provisions that discriminated against parents on the basis of gender or marital status. A married Barbadian mother who was born abroad could not transmit her nationality to her children if they too were born abroad, whereas a married Barbadian father could transmit his nationality to his children regardless of his or his children's place of birth. Similarly, a single Barbadian father could not transmit his nationality to his children in any circumstance. Moreover, Barbadian women were not entitled to transmit their nationality to adopted children, whereas Barbadian men were entitled to do so in all circumstances. She asked whether the State party planned to repeal those discriminatory provisions and, if so, when.

25. She asked whether children were free to set up and run clubs and associations independently; whether children were provided with adequate opportunities to express their views; how the right of children to privacy and to access appropriate information was guaranteed in practice; and whether children had easy access to the Internet and other sources of information. It would also be helpful to hear more about the local media's role in promoting children's rights, the opportunities for children to participate in media-led initiatives, any training on children's rights provided to media professionals and how instances of the media revealing the identity of children involved in sensitive cases were dealt with.

26. Despite the adoption of laws aimed at preventing violence against children, including the bill amending the Education Act, corporal punishment was still permitted in nearly all settings. She asked whether the State party planned to adopt legislation explicitly prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in all settings in the future. The delegation should also provide additional information on the provisions of the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act and indicate whether there was a comprehensive policy for dealing with violence against children, child abuse and neglect to complement the provisions of the Child Care Board Act. She asked whether an inquiry had been conducted into the recent deaths of two children whose cases were being managed by the Child Care Board and, if so, what the outcome of the inquiry had been. What progress had been made in introducing protocols, mechanisms and procedures for receiving, monitoring and investigating cases of child abuse and neglect? The Committee would also appreciate more information on the role and powers of the Child Care Board and on the support offered to civil society organizations working to prevent child abuse and neglect.

27. She would be grateful if the delegation could comment on the accuracy of reports that many victims of sexual abuse did not come forward because they were financially dependent on their abusers or feared reprisals. If those reports were accurate, what measures could be taken to support victims? Had the National Action Plan on Child Sexual Abuse 2010-2013 been renewed or replaced?

28. More information was needed on the exceptions to the legal age of consent, in particular those provided for under sections 4 (2) and 5 of the Sexual Offences Act, the apparent lack of a comprehensive policy on the sexual exploitation of children, and the

circumstances in which children aged 16 years or over were allowed by law to marry, despite the legal age of marriage being 18 years. She wished to know whether any helplines had been set up for children and, if they had, whether they were free of charge, what their operating hours were and whether a single telephone number was in use throughout the country. If there were no such helplines, could resources be allocated to set one up?

The meeting was suspended at 3.45 p.m. and resumed at 4.10 p.m.

29. **Mr. Kellman** (Barbados) said that the Government would work towards the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention. One of the main obstacles to the ratification of additional international human rights instruments was a lack of specialist staff following the civil service reforms of 2013. In November 2016, the Cabinet had set up a mechanism to review recommendations made by the United Nations treaty bodies and during the universal periodic review process.

30. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that, although the rights set forth in the Convention were already protected by a range of legislative acts, the Government had decided to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing legal framework. The review had led to the recommendation that a unified Children's Act should be drafted to harmonize the legal protection available for children. The text of the draft would be widely disseminated and it would be possible to fast-track any proposed amendments that met with universal approval. The Act would include explicit reference to the Convention, set forth and define the principle of respect for the best interests of the child and establish 18 years as the universal age of majority. The principle of respect for the views of the child, which had already been incorporated into a number of legislative acts, including the Family Law Act and the Change of Name Act, would also be fully incorporated into the Children's Act, as would children's right to free legal representation and their right to privacy. The Act would also provide for the establishment of a new helpline.

31. In response to other issues raised, she said that media outlets did occasionally undermine children's right to privacy, but were widely condemned for doing so. There were plans to establish the post of children's ombudsman, provided that the necessary budgetary resources could be found. All children were equal before the law, including those born out of wedlock. The Maintenance Act had been amended to allow all legal guardians to apply for maintenance through a magistrate's court, an option that had previously been available only to single mothers. The children of Barbadian women married to foreign men were in practice granted Barbadian citizenship, but their right to Barbadian citizenship had not been set forth in law. The National Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child included representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and civil society organizations.

32. **Mr. Madi** asked whether the children of Barbadian women married to foreign men were required to fulfil any conditions, for example to reside for a set period in Barbados, in order to qualify for citizenship.

33. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that, some years previously, a commission set up by the Government had recommended that the children of Barbadian women married to foreign men should be granted Barbadian citizenship. However, while the Immigration Department had brought its procedures into line with that recommendation, the change had yet to pass into law.

34. **Ms. Sandberg** said that she would be grateful for clarification regarding the role of the National Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child. It would be helpful in particular to learn whether its mandate included oversight of the implementation of the Convention across the various ministries. How often did it meet? Could the delegation offer an evaluation of its performance?

35. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said it was the National Committee that had prepared the report under consideration. Its functions included data collection, monitoring and publicity, and it had provided the impetus for the legislative reforms currently under way. It met on the second Wednesday of each month. There were plans to draft a juvenile justice act, which would raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years.

36. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked for clarification regarding the circumstances in which children aged 16 or 17 years could marry.

37. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that parental consent was the only condition for the marriage of children aged 16 or 17 years. They did not require judicial approval to marry. However, anyone could challenge the legality of a marriage through the courts.

38. **Ms. Sandberg** said that, in her view, the circumstances in which exceptions to the minimum age of marriage were granted should be limited. For example, in order to marry, children aged 16 or 17 years could be required to obtain judicial approval in addition to their parents' consent.

39. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that, in any case, Barbadians by and large tended not to marry at such a young age.

40. **Mr. Madi** said that the Committee would be grateful if, on its return to Barbados, the delegation could pass on the concerns that had been expressed regarding the exception to the minimum age of marriage.

41. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that applications for student visas submitted by migrant children were considered on a case-by-case basis; there was no blanket policy in operation. However, student visas were granted in the majority of cases. Any changes to the existing policy would have to be negotiated with the other members of the Caribbean Community and new reciprocal arrangements would have to be put in place.

42. **Ms. Nurse** (Barbados) said that the Child Care Board was the agency responsible for child protection and for dealing with cases of child abuse in Barbados. Cases could be referred to the Board by government agencies, children or other persons, by telephone or by visiting the Board's offices. Once a case had been brought to the Board's attention, an investigation was normally conducted. The Board also arranged residential or foster care for homeless or abandoned children and oversaw the adoption process. Children who were referred to the Board were assessed to determine which type of care that would best suit their needs. Very few children were placed in foster care, as the Board had a strong preference for adoption. Day care was heavily subsidized by the Government; children received three meals per day at a cost of US\$ 10 per week. As to the recent deaths of two children whose cases were being managed by the Child Care Board, one case was still before the courts and no one had been found liable in the other case. The multiple indicator cluster surveys referred to in the periodic report had been completed in 2012 with the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The recently published outcome document was helping the Government to improve the situation of women and children in Barbados.

43. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked for additional information on the circumstances and outcome of the cases concerning the two recently deceased children.

44. **Ms. Nurse** (Barbados) said that, in the case where no one had been found liable, the child in question had died by hanging. The case had been referred to the Child Care Board two years previously, at which point it had attempted to locate the child after he had changed residence. The Board had received no new information on the situation of the child during that two-year period. In the case that was still before the courts, charges had been brought against the mother and stepfather of the child in question, who were currently out on bail.

45. **Ms. Sandberg** asked whether the case where no one had been found liable was a criminal case, whether the Child Care Board could have handled it differently, whether another government agency could have intervened and what lessons the Board had learnt.

46. **Ms. Nurse** (Barbados) said that there had been an inquest in the case where no one had been found liable. Following the tragic death of the two children, the Board's governing body, which met on a monthly basis, had invited a consultant from UNICEF to conduct a review of the Board's activities and to make recommendations.

47. **Mr. Knight** (Barbados) said that the case in which no one had been found liable had revealed deficiencies in the Board's management information system, which had been reviewed and improved as a result. It was possible that, if the Board had possessed more up-to-date information about the child's situation, his life could have been saved. The improved management information system, which would help staff keep better track of vulnerable children, should be in place by March 2017. The deficiencies in the existing management information system, coupled with the Board's heavy workload and lack of human resources, were to blame for the death of the child in question.

48. **Ms. Sandberg** said that the Committee could make a recommendation calling for additional resources to be allocated to the Child Care Board.

49. **Ms. Nurse** (Barbados) said that, with the financial assistance of UNICEF, in May 2016 the Child Care Board had provided training to police officers, probation officers, social workers and child welfare officers on children's rights and dealing with child abuse. There were plans to dispense similar training to media professionals, as there had been cases in which the media had not shown sufficient sensitivity towards children. In Barbados, the majority of women gave birth at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, where they were provided with a "medical passport", which contained information on the mother and her newborn child. Once filled in, the medical passport was sent to the registration department and the child's birth was registered. Although birth registration was free of charge, a nominal fee of US\$ 2.50 was levied for issuing a birth certificate. Possessing a birth certificate was a prerequisite for enrolling a child in school and accessing health-care services. Children born in Barbados to migrant parents were also registered.

50. **The Chair** asked whether the fee could be waived if the child's parents were unable to pay.

51. **Ms. Nurse** (Barbados) said that the Child Care Board could pay the fee on the parents' behalf if required. However, cases in which parents could not afford to pay the fee were few and far between.

52. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that the birth registration rate currently stood at 100 per cent in Barbados.

53. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that, following the tragic deaths of two children whose cases were being managed by the Child Care Board, the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act had been amended to give the police additional powers.

54. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that a mandatory reporting protocol for cases of child abuse had been devised and would shortly become law. The Child Care Board and other agencies used the protocol to train professionals who worked with children on a regular basis. In the interim, all persons who suspected that a child was being abused were strongly encouraged to follow the protocol when reporting the abuse. Once the protocol had entered into force, the public at large would be required to report child abuse. To date, the protocol had proven to be extremely effective.

55. **Ms. Aho Assouma** asked whether it was compulsory for parents to request a birth certificate and, if so, what the consequences were of not doing so.

56. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that the majority of parents understood the ramifications of not possessing a birth certificate and so did not object to paying the nominal fee to obtain one. There was seldom a case where new parents did not request a birth certificate for their child, as it was considered a vital document.
57. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked whether the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act contained a provision protecting the identity of persons who reported abuse.
58. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that the Act did indeed contain such a provision.
59. **Ms. Sandberg** asked whether girls continued to suffer gender-based discrimination in Barbadian society and, if so, what measures had been taken to remedy that situation.
60. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that girls were not discriminated against in Barbados. In the past, girls had encountered difficulties in accessing education on account of the segregated education system, which had been all but abolished. Girls now enjoyed equal access to education in the predominantly co-educational system.
61. **Ms. Sandberg** asked what proportion of public expenditure was allocated to the realization of children's rights and how budgetary allocations for children were tracked. She also asked whether children were provided with sufficient opportunities to express their views and whether their views were respected in practice, or whether children tended to be seen and not heard in Barbadian society.
62. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that children's views were respected in certain situations but not in others. The Government was continuing to work to raise awareness among parents of the need to listen to their children and to allow them to express their views. In general, parents from an educated background were more likely to take their children's views into account. Although no specific budgetary allocations were made for children in general, special allocations were made for children with disabilities.
63. **The Chair** said that she understood there was no specific budget for the realization of children's rights.
64. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that the central Government allocated a proportion of the total national budget to each ministry, which, in turn, allocated budgetary resources to the different agencies attached to it, as was the case with the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development and the Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child. The cultural norms of Barbadian society had evolved over time and children's views were heard and respected more than ever before.
65. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked what human and financial resources had been allocated to the Child Care Board to enable it to fulfil its broad mandate and what support had been offered to civil society organizations working to prevent child abuse.
66. **Mr. Madi** said that the Committee had received reports that a Barbadian woman married to a foreign national was not entitled to transmit her nationality to her children when they were born abroad. He understood that restriction to be linked to article 5 of the Constitution. He invited the delegation to confirm whether that was indeed the case.
67. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked whether the State party conducted a comprehensive child rights impact assessment prior to drawing up the national budget; how it monitored public expenditure on the different aspects of children's rights; how it tracked the special allocations made for children with disabilities and other vulnerable children; how it guaranteed equality in spending on children; and whether it assessed the effectiveness of such spending. Having an overview of the impact of public expenditure on children's rights from the outset would enable the State party to allocate budgetary resources in such a way that the rights enshrined in the Convention would be progressively realized. He also

recalled the need to maintain public spending on children in spite of any budgetary adjustments that might become necessary in the future.

68. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that an annual budget of US\$ 125 million was allocated to meeting children's needs across all sectors. The budget was shared among the different ministries that carried out work related to children and their agencies. The Child Care Board was allocated a budget of US\$ 10 million to perform the tasks assigned to it.

69. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked whether the State party, prior to dividing up the budget of US\$ 125 million among the different ministries, identified all the sectoral programmes that could have an impact on children's rights and earmarked resources for those specific programmes, or whether the onus was on the different ministries to do so once they had received their share of the budget. He drew the delegation's attention to the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights (CRC/C/GC/19) for future reference.

70. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that it was standard practice to identify the programmes within the different ministries that could have an impact on the rights of certain groups before drawing up the national budget, thus facilitating the task of tracking budgetary allocations.

71. **Mr. Blackett** (Barbados) said that, when the budget of US\$ 125 million was being divided up among the different ministries, resources were normally earmarked for specific programmes, which helped account for spending in different sectors.

72. **Ms. Nurse** (Barbados) said that each ministry was required to submit a list of the programmes for which it wished to request funding for a quarterly review. The ministry concerned was required to justify why the programmes warranted the budgetary resources requested and to prove that the budgetary resources allocated previously had been put to good use. The Child Care Board submitted a monthly expenses report to its governing body.

73. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** asked whether civil society organizations, children and adolescents participated in the planning of the budget. Had channels of communication been established to facilitate their participation in the process?

74. **Ms. Nurse** (Barbados) said that civil society organizations made important contributions to the work of the Child Care Board. It was rare for the Board to receive specific requests from children, but their interests were always taken into account.

75. **Mr. Knight** (Barbados) said it had been proposed that some of the functions of the Child Care Board, such as the provision of day-care centres, should be transferred to other bodies. Day-care centres had been set up for preschool-age children from low-income families.

76. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that, with regard to the conferral of citizenship on children born abroad, the delegation would consult the Immigration Department and provide a response the following day.

77. **Ms. Aho Assouma** asked whether there were any plans to conduct awareness-raising campaigns with a view to reducing the prevalence of the corporal punishment of children and whether helplines had been set up to receive calls from children.

78. **Ms. Nurse** (Barbados) said that the possibility of setting up a helpline to receive calls from children was under active consideration.

79. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that awareness-raising activities, including daily television broadcasts, had been organized to dispel misconceptions among Barbadians regarding the nature of the rights of the child. Additionally, members of the National Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child were often invited to speak at schools on

special occasions such as speech days. Measures had been taken to raise awareness of the rights of the child among both children and adults.

80. Although the corporal punishment of children remained an entrenched practice, efforts were being made to promote alternative forms of punishment. More remained to be done to reduce the prevalence of corporal punishment in the home. Judicial corporal punishment for children remained on the statute books, but it had not been used for many years. Some people argued that, as judicial corporal punishment had been abolished for adults, it should also be abolished for children.

81. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** said that she would be grateful for more information on the exceptions to the legal age of consent and sections 4 (2) and 5 of the Sexual Offences Act.

82. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Barbados) said that there were no exceptions to the legal age of consent, which was 16 years. Nevertheless, there were a few defences that could be raised to challenge an allegation of sexual activity with a child aged under 16 years, for example if the defendant had reasonably believed that the victim had been 16 years of age or over at the time of the activity.

83. **Ms. Khazova** asked what measures had been taken to address the challenges outlined in paragraph 58 of the State party report (CRC/C/BRB/2), in particular the failure of some fathers to take custody of their children even when they had been found capable of doing so. Additional information on the procedure for the removal of children from their parents' care in emergency situations would be appreciated. Were the courts involved in the procedure? Was there a requirement for a psychologist to be present? She wished to know whether children who had been placed in residential care had any prospect of being adopted or placed with a family and whether children who were to be placed with foster families were consulted in advance of the placement.

84. As the Family Law Act, which regulated issues of custody, access and maintenance, seemed to apply only to families in which the parents were married or had lived together for a certain number of years, it would be helpful to know what measures had been put in place to deal with other families.

85. More information on the adoption procedure in Barbados would be appreciated. In particular, she wished to know whether it was a judicial procedure, how any problems were dealt with and whether an adoption placement could be terminated. Lastly, she wished to know whether cross-border disputes, including parental child abductions and disputes between parents residing in different countries, represented a significant problem. How were such disputes dealt with?

86. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** asked whether new targets had been set for the reduction of the infant mortality rate, what measures had been taken to achieve them and what the results of those measures had been. Had the referral and treatment protocols introduced to reduce the infant mortality rate sufficient been successful? It would be helpful to know what measures had been taken to combat malnutrition among children aged under 5 years and what policies had been adopted to promote breastfeeding. Had the Queen Elizabeth Hospital been certified under the baby-friendly hospital initiative?

87. **The Chair** said that, although the State party was to be congratulated on the progress made in the field of education, the Committee still had a number of concerns in that regard. It would be helpful if the delegation could comment on reports that the high cost of textbooks and transport prevented some children from attending school and that some parents sent their children to work rather than to school. While she acknowledged that an explanation of the measures taken to combat the corporal punishment of children had already been provided, the delegation should explain what prevented corporal punishment in schools from being abolished immediately. The delegation might also comment on

reports that migrant children, even those legally resident in Barbados, were denied certain benefits, awards and scholarships.

88. She wished to know whether any research on the dropout rate among primary school-age children had been conducted and, if it had, what conclusions had been drawn. Additionally, it would be helpful to learn what measures had been taken to guarantee the accessibility of schools to all children, in particular children with disabilities, and how many children with disabilities benefited from inclusive education.

89. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked whether the State party planned to sign and ratify the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and what facilities and services were available to migrants.

90. With regard to economic exploitation, she would be grateful for clarification regarding the minimum age for legal employment, as the situation was currently unclear, in particular with regard to exceptions for employment in hazardous work. Could the delegation provide information on the kinds of work in which children were engaged? In the light of the findings of a 2013 report on the worst forms of child labour in Barbados, she wished to know whether a national child labour survey had been conducted to assess their prevalence. Did labour inspectors conduct dedicated child labour inspections? Were sufficient resources and training provided for such inspections?

91. Further information on street children, including statistics, would be appreciated. With regard to trafficking in persons, it would be helpful if the delegation could comment on reports that the State party was a source and a destination country for sex trafficking and trafficking in forced labour, that it lacked a policy framework to combat the sexual exploitation of children and appeared to lack a ban on child pornography, and that no traffickers had ever been convicted.

92. The provisions of the Reformatory and Industrial Schools Act and the Juvenile Offenders Act seemed excessively severe. Under the Reformatory and Industrial Schools Act, for instance, children who ran away from home could be charged with “wandering” and sent to a reformatory or industrial school. However, many children, in particular girls, ran away from home to escape abusive domestic situations. Furthermore, children removed from abusive domestic situations were also sent to reformatory and industrial schools. Could the delegation comment on those arrangements? Lastly, she wished to know whether a board had been set up to review custodial sentences handed down to children and what kind of legal representation was provided for them.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.