



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General  
23 January 2017

Original: English

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child Seventy-fourth session

### Summary record of the 2167th meeting (Chamber B)

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 18 January 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Mezmur

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

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

*Combined second to fourth periodic reports of Estonia* (continued) (CRC/C/EST/2-4; CRC/C/EST/Q/2-4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Estonia took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the Government had submitted its second report under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in January 2016 and its initial report under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict in June 2016.
3. Following the recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to amend the Family Law Act to ensure that the occurrence of domestic violence was always considered in determining custody of children, no legislative changes had yet been made; however, it should be noted that the views of specialists, and any facts, including instances of domestic violence, were always taken into account by the judge during court proceedings concerning children. All custody decisions were made with the child's best interests in mind.
4. **Mr. Pere** (Estonia) said that the statistics on underage marriage had remained fairly stable since 2011, averaging 4 or 5 cases per year, compared with 19 cases in 2010. He did not know how many marriage applications had been filed or granted, but the number granted was likely to be high, since the procedure was oral rather than written. No information was available on the social background of the minors concerned. The Government would consider analysing that issue in future.
5. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the delegation had grouped the Committee's questions into thematic blocks, the first of which concerned voting rights and the preparedness of young persons to exercise their right to vote.
6. **Ms. Nikonov** (Estonia) said that, in preparation for the forthcoming elections, an extensive project had been launched by the Chancellor of Justice, in coordination with the Estonian National Youth Council and the Estonian School Student Councils' Union, to inform young persons about their voting rights. Students were directly involved in organizing the project, through their participation in the Estonian School Student Councils' Union. As part of the project, young persons were being recruited as election observers and official members of local electoral commissions. As ambassadors in their own schools, they were responsible for sharing information about the election process and organizing debates among their peers. The aim was to raise awareness among persons aged 16 to 18 years, supplement existing election observer programmes organized by NGOs and ensure that no ethical standards were infringed by political parties during the election campaign.
7. With regard to the inclusion of marginalized groups, it should be noted that anyone with a residence permit had the right to vote and to participate in local electoral commissions, without being subject to language requirements.
8. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that deinstitutionalization was a topical issue that extended beyond the sphere of the rights of the child. It was being addressed by the Government in the context of European Union guidelines on the use of funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds and would continue to be discussed during the forthcoming Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

9. **Ms. Riisalo** (Estonia) said that only 3 of the 39 substitute homes required modernization. One of those three homes would be closed down in the summer of 2017 and replaced with individual apartments. In December 2014, the Government had drafted a green paper on developing alternative care, in which it had established three main objectives: to increase the number of children in family-based alternative care, to improve the quality of services relating to alternative care, and to support children leaving alternative care. As of 1 January 2017, alternative care was not subject to an age limit and young persons could remain in substitute homes until the age of 25 years, to ensure support for those wishing to undertake higher education.

10. Thanks to funding from the European Union, the Government was preparing for an extensive reform, which would include better training for foster parents, adoptive families and caregivers in substitute homes. The new training would be more practical and less prescriptive; it would include advice on how to interact with children and ensure their participation in everyday life at home. Some of the funding would be used to support service providers. In 2013, the State had started buying services for adoptive families, before extending the policy in 2016 to all families raising non-biological children; those services included mentoring programmes, online and telephone counselling, and group and individual counselling for families. It had also extended its supervision of substitute home staff and planned to improve the monitoring of those homes further, by providing training in that area for Social Insurance Board personnel. Young persons leaving care had started to receive support from external, trained professionals, rather than from volunteers from substitute homes.

11. The maximum number of children per alternative care family was currently eight and would be reduced to six by 2020. The Government had stipulated that a certain sum of funding should be set aside by the family for the child's personal costs and had introduced regulations governing the minimum and maximum amount of time spent by the mother caring for the child on a full-time basis, in order to protect the rights of both the mother and the child. Family-based care accounted for 59 per cent of cases of alternative care. The number of foster children was only 205, whereas the number of children in custody families, including those involving kinship, was 1,275. The number of children in institutions totalled a little over 1,000, of whom only 45 were under 3 years old, 40 per cent were disabled, and 160 were over 18 years old. The low number of foster children was due to the fact that foster families were volunteers who received no payment apart from an allowance to cover the child's expenses. The Government was considering ways to address that issue. It also intended to improve the quality of foster care, by better preparing the families concerned and providing support services during the period of care.

12. The number of adopted children was low owing to the Family Law Act, under which a child could only be adopted following full loss of parental right of custody, a measure that was only taken as a last resort. The Ministry of Social Affairs had been responsible for international adoption until 2016, when the role of central authority had been reassigned to the Social Insurance Board, which had drafted guidelines to ensure the safety and quality of the adoption process. The number of international adoptions each year was generally fewer than 10. As of 2017, the Social Insurance Board had also been given responsibility for domestic adoption. The national register of adoptees served not only as a record but also as a tool to help social workers support families throughout the adoption process.

13. With regard to shelters, the Government had not established minimum staffing levels because it preferred to guarantee quality of service through other methods, such as internal monitoring and complaint mechanisms. Under the Child Protection Act, the maximum period spent in a shelter must not exceed 72 hours. Within that period, a decision must be made by the court as to whether the child should be separated from his or her family and placed in alternative care. The fact that shelters were funded by the municipal

budget rather than the State budget was a further incentive for municipal authorities to limit their use.

14. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that, alongside improvements to existing infrastructure, there had been a shift towards community-based solutions in Estonia, which would ultimately reduce fragmentation and create a solid foundation on which to develop alternatives to institutions. Rather than setting standards in terms of the ratio of staff to children, the Government was investing in qualitative evaluation to ensure that children were receiving appropriate care.

15. **Ms. Vsevirov** (Estonia) said that among children aged 3 to 6 years preschool enrolment was approximately 90 per cent, and that more than one third of children under the age of 3 years were enrolled. The rate was lowest among very young children, owing to the generous parental leave and benefits system: parents received an allowance equal to their previous income until the child reached the age of 18 months, after which the municipality was required to provide a preschool place for every child up to the age of 7 years. There had been a lack of places for young children, particularly in large cities, but that problem would be fully resolved by 2020 thanks to European Union funding, which was being used to create more places. The Government would then focus on childcare solutions for parents with non-standard working hours and children with special needs.

16. A study conducted by the European Commission in 2014 had found that the quality of preschool education in Estonia was high, thanks in part to teacher training requirements, measures to promote inclusive education, and child development monitoring. The ratio of staff to children was close to the European average.

17. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the Government had been discussing how to make the parental leave and benefits system more flexible and encourage more men to play an active role in child-rearing. It aimed to ensure that families enjoyed freedom of choice and received all the support that they needed in order to reconcile work and family life.

18. **Ms. Nikonov** (Estonia) said that compulsory schooling lasted for nine years in Estonia. The overall dropout rate was 0.7 per cent, one of the lowest in the world. A more pressing concern was the 1.1 per cent dropout rate for general and vocational secondary education. The Government was considering ways to reduce that rate and the possibility of extending compulsory schooling.

19. No gender-specific programmes had been introduced to combat dropout; instead, steps were taken on a case-by-case basis. Specialists were available to support children, either at the level of an individual school or, if the school was small, within the framework of the Pathfinder network. Some children with poor attendance were given an individual curriculum or transferred to a smaller class. Assistance was provided in cooperation with local governments and in the context of the overall child protection system, to ensure that all factors affecting dropout were addressed. Projects were also being planned to help children who had dropped out to return to education or find suitable work.

20. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that local authorities checked their databases regularly to ensure that children started school at the right time. Steps were also taken to ensure that children were ready to enter further education or the world of work when they left school.

21. **Ms. Nikonov** (Estonia) said that the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Estonia was 14 years. Young offenders heard by juvenile committees were not placed on the punishment register and hence did not have a criminal record, but they did receive sanctions. Non-compliance with sanctions did not have any direct consequences, but a reoffender who had not complied with previous sanctions might receive a harsher sanction as a result, such as referral to a special school, subject to a court order. Studies had shown that young offenders viewed juvenile committees as punitive rather than supportive; the

Government was therefore making various changes to legislation and policy in order to clarify the situation and ensure that young offenders were helped rather than punished.

22. The proposal to abolish juvenile committees was currently being examined by the parliament. Under the new, comprehensive system that had been developed by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Social Affairs, low-risk offences would be dealt with by the police or, in some cases, prosecutors. Police and prosecutors would receive training on constructive interaction with young offenders and ways to reduce the risk of reoffending. Mediation between victims and offenders was another method that would be developed further. In future, all young offenders would be referred promptly by the police to the child protection service, to ensure that their needs were addressed on an equal basis with other young persons. Such referral would replace the current mechanism of referral to juvenile committees.

23. Special schools were, by definition, closed institutions; however, under new legislation that applied not only to special schools but also to other institutions where a child's liberty could be restricted, such a measure should only be imposed as a last resort, the level of restriction should be constantly reviewed and reduced where possible, and the child should receive intensive support from specialists, particularly when facing problems such as drug addiction.

24. **Mr. Guráň** (Country Rapporteur), noting concerns that children who had been placed in special schools were subsequently unable to continue their education elsewhere, said that he would like to know whether special schools followed the same curriculum as mainstream schools. It would also be helpful to know whether a limit had been set on the amount of time that could be spent in a special school.

25. **Ms. Winter** said that the question concerning the specialization of judges had not yet been answered.

26. **Ms. Nikonov** (Estonia) said that children who were placed in special schools were later able to continue their education in mainstream schools because there was no difference in curriculum or quality of education. Occasionally, the standard curriculum was simplified for children who had fallen behind, subject to the decision of a special committee. Under new legislation, the length of time spent in a special school had been limited to one year, although that period could be extended by order of the court. As soon as the child's situation had improved, an application could be made, by the child or a representative, for permission to leave the institution.

27. There were no judges specialized in referrals to special schools, but judges who regularly handled children's cases received additional training in that regard. The responsibility for decisions relating to special schools was being transferred to civil courts, where a larger proportion of judges dealt with children's cases on a regular basis and had received relevant training, which could then be built upon.

28. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that since Estonia was a small country, there were few opportunities for specialization outside the main cities.

29. **The Chair** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would like to know whether the reintegration of children from special schools into mainstream schooling was a source of concern and if so, what measures were being taken in that regard. Secondly, noting that many Russian-speaking children ended up in vocational education, partly owing to the language barrier, he wished to know whether the Government planned to dedicate additional resources to the provision of Estonian language lessons for such children.

30. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that resources had been devoted to the development and renewal of special school facilities and working methods. The psychosocial rehabilitation process involved many specialists and a range of extracurricular activities. The links

between special and mainstream schooling had been greatly improved. Schools were responsible for assessing each student's needs and providing the necessary support; they received additional funding for complex cases where long-term support was required. The existing system ensured that every child received adequate support.

31. The Ministry of Education and Research and school administrations were monitoring the situation with respect to language learning and taking steps to ensure that all students received ongoing support, including language lessons, that would help them to access the world of work. The transition from vocational education to professional life was an important issue that concerned all students of vocational schools, including Russian speakers.

32. **Mr. Pere** (Estonia) said that the number of minors in prison had fallen in recent years and currently totalled 23. The Government hoped that the number would continue to fall, rendering the special unit in Viru prison obsolete, thanks to the new legislation concerning young offenders and the alternative measures that were being introduced. Following the recent increase in disciplinary issues in that special unit, a number of steps had been taken, including the introduction of a multidimensional family therapy programme, in which 20 minors and their families had participated in 2015. The unit also offered individual counselling, support groups and educational opportunities, including Estonian language lessons.

33. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that, in the previous 10 years, there had been a steady decline in the number of juvenile offenders serving prison sentences. Amendments being considered by the parliament in the areas of juvenile justice, criminal justice and police action were expected to have an impact on further reducing the use of custodial sentences for minors. The target should ultimately be to have no juvenile offenders at all in prison but rather to provide a different setting for their rehabilitation. Estonia was making sure progress towards achieving that goal.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.*

34. **Mr. Pere** (Estonia) said that the decision as to whether to interview a child during legal proceedings was not left exclusively to the child's parents or legal guardians, as it was necessary to protect the best interests of the child, and the interests of the parties sometimes conflicted, especially in criminal cases involving violence or the sexual abuse of a child by a parent. The Government was developing a system to ensure that all officials who participated in the proceedings were trained in the skills needed to conduct such interviews in a child-friendly manner or had access to child psychologists or other specialized social workers who could assist them in questioning children appropriately.

35. According to the law, no child under the age of 10 years — and no child under the age of 14 years in cases of sexual abuse or domestic violence — could be questioned in court. The questioning of such children was video recorded, prior to proceedings, in a child-friendly and purpose-built room of a police station. With regard to child victims, who made up the bulk of child witnesses, the law provided that children whose interests conflicted with those of their parents were to be assigned a special legal representative to protect their interests and, if necessary, to bring legal action, such as a civil claim against one of the child's parents. It was a generally accepted principle that all children involved in criminal proceedings should be treated in a child-friendly manner, and the Government hoped to ensure respect for that principle by providing adequate training to all personnel involved in such proceedings.

36. **Mr. Kotrane** asked whether Estonian law required judges to substantiate their decisions in cases involving children — such as those awarding the custody of a child to one of the parents — in terms of whether or not the judge had heard and taken into account the child's views and had given priority to his or her best interests. He wished to know

whether judges were sufficiently trained in the provisions of the Convention and the Committee's general comments to enable them to apply those instruments effectively.

37. **Mr. Pere** (Estonia) said that, in cases in which a judge had to decide whether or not to impose a custodial sentence on one or both of a child's parents, for example, there was no legal requirement for the decision to indicate whether or not the best interests of the child had been taken into account. Nevertheless, including such reasoning when drafting a decision was considered to be good judicial practice. In cases in which a juvenile offender was facing a custodial sentence, the law specifically required judges to carefully consider whether such a sentence was necessary or whether an acceptable alternative could be found.

38. As to the training of judges in the Convention and the Committee's general comments, the small size of Estonia and its correspondingly small pool of judges, which numbered some 200, made it difficult for the latter to specialize in a particular area of the law. The 10-20 days of training imparted to them each year were therefore not sufficient to ensure their complete familiarity with all aspects of the law.

39. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the Child Protection Act required that the best interests of the child should be taken into account in decisions concerning child custody. As a safeguard, child experts were asked to evaluate a child's family situation and the parenting skills of the child's parents, and then to report to the judge with specific recommendations that might be considered in drafting his or her decision. Judges' decisions were always substantiated; however, any evidence of failure to take into account the best interests of the child in such cases was considered to be grounds for appeal of the decision.

40. **Ms. Paluste** (Estonia) said that the number of suicides among minors had decreased from 2010 to 2012, but it had then risen in 2013 and 2014 and remained stable in 2015. As yet, there were no data for 2016. When examining those statistics, it was important to bear in mind that the absolute figures for suicide in Estonia were very low: 10 cases in 2013, 20 cases in 2014 and 20 cases in 2015. The Ministry of Social Affairs carefully monitored those trends and considered every case to be important. A study was under way to identify the causes of suicide in all age groups in Estonia for the period 2006-2016. The study was expected to be completed in 2017; based on its results, and in consultation with international experts, specific measures would be introduced to address those causes.

41. A task force for coordinating policy on the prevention of deaths through injury, which included suicide, had been set up in 2013. The task force had submitted a report to the Government, and its recommendations were included in ministerial action plans that were scheduled to be implemented by 2020. One important measure being taken to improve the mental health system involved helping primary health-care staff to identify mental health issues more readily. To that end, an €85 million nationwide investment project had been launched to build new primary health-care centres or renovate existing ones and to expand health-care teams in centres serving large populations to include mental health-care nurses and psychiatrists.

42. Another measure being taken was the updating of guidelines for children's check-ups, which were intended for primary health-care practitioners, in order to place greater emphasis on mental health development and injury prevention. As part of a violence prevention strategy, the Government had developed plans to educate teachers about mental health, prepare educational materials for children and set up a national suicide hotline for children and young people. Other measures included the provision of mental health-care services to children and families by special teams and the launch of a training programme for specialists in promoting children's mental health in families that were at risk. Over the previous four years, more than 1,000 specialists had completed such training.

43. According to a study of health behaviour in school-aged children, the percentage of 11-, 13- and 15-year-olds who had smoked cannabis had not changed appreciably in the

previous decade, standing at about 10 per cent, but the trend nevertheless required close monitoring. No studies had been conducted as to why children started to use recreational drugs. The Estonian Health Development Institute had published various publications on preventing drug use in both Estonian and Russian and had issued recommendations to teachers on preventing drug use in schools. The police force carried out projects on peer pressure and saying no to drugs, and in 2015 60 per cent of all sixth-grade students had participated in those projects. Another prevention-oriented project in 2015 had succeeded in referring over 100 children who had previously used drugs to social programmes. In addition, the Ministry of the Interior was implementing a project that focused on the role of parents in, among other areas, preventing drug use; the project's website had been visited by over 80,000 persons in 2015. The main service provider for treatment and rehabilitation services for children with addiction disorders was the Tallinn Children's Hospital, which provided both institutional and outpatient services, including patient consultations and group therapy sessions.

44. **Mr. Guráň** asked whether the State had adopted any special measures or provided any support to families caring for children with disabilities in order to facilitate their inclusion in family life and to reconcile their care with parents' employment. In addition, he wished to know whether, given that the majority of children with disabilities were institutionalized, the State offered any special programmes for such children. The delegation should further clarify how the State party dealt with the problems inherent in placing children with disabilities in special schools alongside children with behavioural problems.

45. **Mr. Nelson** asked whether the institutions that offered rehabilitation for drug users were run by the State or by private service providers. He invited the delegation to comment on reports of a lack of State oversight or monitoring of such institutions.

46. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that Estonia was in the process of amending its laws concerning juvenile committees, one important aspect of which was the introduction of clear regulations on the provision of drug addiction treatment to minors in closed institutions. One of the facilities that offered such treatment was funded partly by the State and partly by municipalities; another was wholly funded by the State. New regulations were being drafted in order to establish the necessary legal safeguards for minors receiving such treatment.

47. **Ms. Riisalo** (Estonia) said that the total number of children with disabilities in Estonia in 2016 was 12,500, approximately 7,000 of whom had some form of severe disability. With assistance from the European Social Fund, the Ministry of Social Affairs had set itself the objective for the period 2015-2020 of providing services to the parents of children with severe disabilities in order to enable those parents to join the labour force. The services included the provision of caregivers and support persons and, where needed, transportation and job training.

48. Approximately 42 children with severe disabilities still remained in institutions in Estonia, but the trend was towards not placing any more children in institutions and letting their numbers dwindle naturally as children left institutions when they reached 18 years of age. Although there were a number of boarding schools for children with disabilities, the children spent weekends and holidays with their respective families, and greater efforts were being made to support families so that children with disabilities could remain at home. In 2017, State funding would be provided to municipalities to provide shared services for families with children with disabilities, such as day care and support personnel. Municipalities had to comply with strict criteria for spending those funds, and the services they provided had to be tailored to each child and family in accordance with their specific needs.



49. **The Chair** requested clarification as to why the disabled child allowance, which was paid monthly, was provided only until children reached the age of 16 years.

50. **Ms. Riisalo** (Estonia) said that persons with disabilities who were aged 16 years or above received the same allowance from the State as those under the age of 16, only they received them not as children but rather in their capacity as jobseekers who needed additional financial assistance.

51. **Ms. Nikonov** (Estonia) said that the placement of a child in a closed institution was considered carefully by judges on a case-by-case basis, in terms of what kind of children were in each institution and which institution was best suited to the child's needs, and minimized the risks that he or she would face. The Government acknowledged the fact that, in future, it should strive to establish smaller and more specialized institutions for children with different types of needs. That said, children with intellectual disabilities, who were the most vulnerable of those with behavioural problems, were already placed in separate institutions.

52. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that there were currently no children in the Harku Expulsion Centre, which was intended for persons who did not have the right to stay in Estonia and who were awaiting expulsion. Between 2014 and 2016, nine families with children had been placed in the Centre. Any stay in the Centre had to be ordered by a court and was for a two-month period that could be extended by an additional two months. In accordance with an agreement between the Government and the organization SOS Children's Villages, unaccompanied foreign minors did not stay at the expulsion centre but were placed in a substitute home. Estonian legislation provided that the municipality in which the substitute home was located should exercise legal guardianship over such children. Currently, there was only one young person in a substitute home in Estonia. If there was doubt about the young person's age and whether or not he or she was a minor, an examination was conducted by the Estonian Forensic Science Institute, and a determination was then made about the young person's placement.

53. A background check was carried out by the police for all persons seeking asylum in Estonia, which was how the police determined whether or not a minor had been involved in a terrorist organization or activity prior to entering the country. The Government had had very little experience with terrorism and recognized that it needed to further develop its victim support services, adopt preventive measures and prepare its response to a potential act of terrorism on its territory.

*Initial report of Estonia on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC/C/OPAC/EST/1; CRC/C/OPAC/EST/Q/1 and Add.1)*

54. **Mr. Kuimet** (Estonia) said that the Estonian Defence League was a voluntary organization that had over 25,000 members, nearly 7,000 of whom were legally designated as junior members. Junior members were those between the ages of 7 and 18 years and had their own, separate organization within the Defence League.

55. The Estonian Defence League Act specifically prohibited the enrolment of junior members in military training or other Defence League activities that were connected with military training, military defence or the guarding of objects. Those rules were set out in very clear legal provisions and were fully in line with the Optional Protocol.

56. The activities and training of the youth organization were very similar to international scout movement and primarily concerned the history of the Defence League, map reading and basic field skills. The Defence League Act stipulated that junior members were not to be involved in handling firearms with one exception: they could receive basic arms training provided that they were older than 12 years of age, had volunteered for it

themselves, had obtained written consent from their parents or legal guardian and participated in it under the supervision of active members of the Defence League. Nonetheless, their contact with firearms was very limited, did not involve military training and had more to do with the safe handling of firearms and the use of firearms as a sport. All service members of the Defence Forces received training in international human rights law, international humanitarian law and the law of armed conflict. The same training was available to Defence League members.

57. **The Chair** (Country Rapporteur for the Optional Protocol) asked whether the statement contained in the report, to the effect that Estonia did not buy weapons from, sell weapons to, or engage in military cooperation with countries that recruited children under the age of 15 years for their nation's armed forces, reflected a provision of domestic law or was merely a practice. He also asked whether the Government engaged in the sale of arms; if so, he wished to know how it ensured that such sales did not lead to any violation of children's rights in the destination country. The delegation should transmit the answers to those questions, as well as to any other questions in relation to which it wished to provide further clarification, to the Committee within 48 hours from the closure of the interactive dialogue with the Committee.

58. **Mr. Kuimet** (Estonia) said that the Ministry of Defence did not engage in arms sales or issue permits to private companies for such sales. The Estonian Government did not have a defence industry and was not involved in the sale of arms to any significant degree.

59. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the delegation would provide written replies to clarify the ways in which the Government ensured that it did not trade arms with countries in which such arms might fall into the hands of children.

60. **Ms. Piirsoo** (Estonia) said that the import and export of military weapons were regulated by the Strategic Goods Act, which listed a number of prohibitions on the import or export of particular weapons and gave the Strategic Goods Committee broad powers to refuse a permit for the sale or transfer of weapons if it had reason to believe that they might be used to commit human rights violations in the country of destination.

61. **The Chair** said that the delegation should provide clarification in writing about concerns raised by the Council of Europe in connection with the Lanzarote Convention that had been signed by Estonia, that children between the ages of 14 and 18 years were not effectively protected against all forms of sexual exploitation in Estonia and that the level of detection of sexual abuse of children and some of the support services provided to them in Estonia might not be adequate.

62. **Mr. Guráň** (Country Rapporteur for the Optional Protocol) said that it was gratifying to see that Estonia was well on its way to becoming one of a group of countries in which children's well-being was given top priority among family issues.

63. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that his Government truly believed that the steps it was taking would enable it to not only comply with but also exceed the minimum requirements laid down in the Convention. The Committee's observations would be discussed in the Child Protection Council, which had been established by the Child Protection Act, and which advised the Government on issues relating to children's rights.

64. **The Chair** commended the State party for its willingness to go beyond the minimum requirements of the Convention and thanked the delegation for its participation in the dialogue with the Committee.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*