



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child Ninetieth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 2583rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 3 May 2022, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Otani

Contents

Opening of the session

Adoption of the agenda

* 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 Chair** declared open the ninetieth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
2. **Ms. Bachelet** (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that ongoing instability caused by armed conflict, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and intersecting political, economic and environmental crises posed an immediate threat to the rights of all children. The pandemic had reversed decades of progress in children's rights. Physical and psychological violence against children had increased, victims had been left without effective remedies and services to meet their needs had been severely lacking. Disruptions to the provision of health care had led to a huge increase in the number of children living in multidimensional poverty and higher rates of infant and child mortality and vaccine-preventable disease. School closures had caused the loss of more than 2 trillion hours of learning, and two thirds of school-age children had lacked the Internet access necessary to study online. Twenty-three countries had yet to fully reopen schools. Marginalized children, including children with disabilities and migrants, had been most affected.
3. Children continued to suffer the consequences of war. Many were separated from their families and saw their homes destroyed and their education interrupted or discontinued entirely. Those children, whose rights under international law were violated on a daily basis, were entitled to care, assistance and protection at all times.
4. The most basic rights of all children continued to be threatened by climate change. The increasing involvement of child human rights defenders in climate action was reason for hope, and she welcomed the Committee's establishment of a children's advisory team to support the development of its draft general comment on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change.
5. States and other stakeholders must uphold children's right to meaningful participation in decisions and processes that affected them. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) would continue to contribute to the development of a guidance note on child rights mainstreaming.
6. The financial resources allocated to the treaty body system had not kept pace with the treaty bodies' increased workload, as confirmed by a 2021 audit report by the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The Secretary-General had appealed to Member States to ensure the system's financial sustainability; Member States had expressed support for the system during her own discussions with them.
7. The Secretary-General's forthcoming report on the status of the system would provide the treaty bodies with an opportunity to present a unified proposal for a stronger system. The estimated costs of strengthening the system could be included in the Secretary-General's proposed budget. She would lend her full support to the Committee's consideration of adjustments to its review cycle and working methods.
8. The Committee's findings in relation to the children of foreign fighters and the cross-border impact of climate change on children's rights were crucial in the face of increasing polarization. Children's rights were often limited by factors such as discrimination and a lack of political will, a situation that might, without urgent action, persist beyond the current crises. Giving every child the best possible start in life would help secure human rights and development for all.
9. **The Chair** said that the serious violations of the rights of children in Ukraine were of grave concern and would be addressed by the Committee in coordination with OHCHR, other treaty bodies and United Nations agencies. The universal realization of the rights of every child was far from a reality, and the pandemic, conflict, climate change and other crises exacerbated discrimination, poverty and other structural problems, all of which had a disproportionately harsh effect on children.
10. The consideration of the reports of States parties was a vital part of the Committee's monitoring mandate, and she welcomed the return to in-person meetings, as well as the

decision of the High Commissioner and the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva to allow the Committee to extend its ninetieth and ninety-first sessions so as to increase the number of interactive dialogues it held with States parties. However, remote meetings with the delegations of States parties that were unable to travel to Geneva would be shortened to two hours each.

11. As a result of the backlog of reports, there was a gap in the monitoring of States parties' efforts to implement the Convention. Furthermore, the Committee needed additional meeting time and funding to work on individual complaints and inquiries. Sufficient financial and human resources were vital. The Secretary-General, who had identified the need for a funding strategy for the human rights treaty bodies in his call to action for human rights, and OHCHR had adopted concrete measures to implement such a strategy.

12. In preparation for the thirty-fourth meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, the Committee would address its decision to move towards a predictable eight-year review cycle with midterm follow-up and a simplified reporting procedure, along with the backlog and other issues. The mainstreaming of children's rights at all levels of and across the United Nations system was critical to the universal realization of such rights. The Committee would therefore continue to strengthen its cooperation with United Nations agencies, including in the development of the guidance note on child rights mainstreaming.

13. **Mr. Smith** (International Labour Organization (ILO)), speaking via video link, said that while the universal ratification of the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), achieved in August 2020, was a historic first, full implementation remained a challenge. Indeed, for the first time in recorded history, the number of children in child labour had risen. That increase had occurred entirely among younger children, and almost half of children in child labour were engaged in hazardous work. The figures showing the increase were based on data from before the pandemic, which was expected to have exacerbated the problem. There were significant disparities at the regional level, with rates falling in some regions and rising in others, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, along with differences between rural and urban areas. Seventy per cent of child labour took place in the agricultural sector, mainly on family farms, and families must therefore be assisted in keeping their children out of work through adequate incomes, social security measures, decent work for parents and free, high-quality education.

14. The powerful effect of social protection on reducing child labour, which had been highlighted in a forthcoming report to be published jointly by ILO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), was enhanced by integrated social protection systems that provided lifelong benefits. The report would help policymakers build comprehensive and child-friendly social protection systems.

15. The Fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, to be held in May 2022, would bring together a range of stakeholders to take stock of progress and identify good practice, viable solutions and implementation gaps. The outcome document would commit States to increasing their efforts in areas including education, social protection and decent work for parents. It would also lay out a follow-up mechanism.

16. **Ms. Bergh** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the High Commissioner's recent report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/49/31](#)) and the Council's full-day meeting on the rights of the child, held in March 2022, had focused on family reunification, highlighting the alarming number of children separated from their families each year. The report had emphasized the harm, potentially lifelong, suffered by those children and recommended that family reunification procedures should be strengthened, including by ensuring that children could exercise their right to be heard on matters that affected them. In its resolution on family reunification, adopted in April 2022, the Council had decided that the theme of the next full-day meeting on the rights of the child would be children's rights and the digital environment and requested a thematic report on inclusive social protection, including, for the first time, a child-friendly version. The resolution also requested OHCHR to follow up on the Council's 2020 high-level panel on human rights mainstreaming, which had focused on child rights mainstreaming, by producing a report with specific recommendations.

17. The broader efforts made by OHCHR to strengthen the integration of children's rights across the United Nations system included its planning of consultations, not least with children, on the guidance note on child rights mainstreaming and its establishment of a youth advisory board comprising 10 young persons to provide guidance on vulnerable young persons in preparation for the development of a tool on youth rights.

18. **Ms. Bolshakova** (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)) said that children, especially those in vulnerable situations, were disproportionately affected by the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature loss and pollution. Children the world over had also played an important role in defending the environment.

19. UNEP supported the Committee's draft general comment on children's rights and the environment. Together with 14 other agencies, it had also expressed support for the landmark 2021 resolution in which the Human Rights Council had recognized that everyone, including children, had the right to a healthy environment. UNEP strongly recommended that the General Assembly, too, should recognize that right.

20. An inter-agency group of which UNEP was an active member had made a commitment, which had been endorsed by heads of United Nations entities, to promote the environmental rights of children, other young people and future generations. A survey would be launched shortly in order to identify existing gaps and publicize plans for the implementation of the joint commitment. The survey would be followed by consultations involving both children and adults, since the participation of children was a key principle of the joint commitment.

21. UNEP sought to enhance its capacity to promote children's environmental rights by providing training courses for members of its staff. It also provided training opportunities for children and was developing an online children's course on the environment with OHCHR that would be made available in the coming months. In 2021, UNEP, UNICEF and OHCHR had produced a publication laying out principles and providing policy guidance on children's rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment in the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

22. **Ms. Grandjean** (United Nations Children's Fund), speaking via video link, said that UNICEF welcomed the Committee's recent decisions on the responsibility of States for the impact of their carbon emissions and on the repatriation of children from conflict zones.

23. In 2021, UNICEF had provided support for access to education to 48.6 million out-of-school children, including 6.4 million children on the move and 31.7 million children in humanitarian settings. In addition, 335.9 million children had been provided with services to prevent stunting and other effects of malnutrition. Joint programming with the United Nations Population Fund had made it possible to provide prevention and care services to 7.6 million adolescent girls at risk of child marriage. From 2018 to 2021, action had been taken to provide access to safe water for nearly 70 million people and to make basic sanitation services available to nearly 60 million. In 2021, UNICEF had taken steps to provide access to COVID-19 vaccines and other related supplies and services in 156 countries.

24. A grim picture of the many threats to human rights, including the rise of autocracies, climate change and inequitable recovery from the pandemic, had been painted at the forty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council, which had begun in late February 2022. As in previous sessions, the resolution on the rights of the child had triggered intense negotiations on the issue of children's status as holders of rights independently of their parents or guardians. Other matters, including wording in the resolution reflecting the prohibition of the detention of children in the context of immigration, had also prompted debate. In that context, UNICEF had referred to the two general comments that, in November 2019, the Committee had adopted jointly with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. That reference had proved instrumental to improving the wording contained in the final version of the resolution.

25. UNICEF welcomed the statement, issued jointly by the Committee and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2022, on the rights of children with disabilities, particularly their rights to freedom from violence, abuse and exploitation, to inclusive education and to family life. In partnership with Leiden University, UNICEF was

developing guidance on child rights legislative reform. It would shortly start collecting recent good practices relating to the content of bills or codes on children's rights and the legislative process.

26. The first draft of the report on the policing of assemblies involving children had been completed and shared with an advisory group for comments. It incorporated the views of children and adolescents who had participated in protests in nine countries; it also relayed the views of experts on child rights and law enforcement from around the world. The hope was to release the report in the third quarter of 2022.

27. The UNICEF Human Rights Unit was currently pursuing research, advocacy and programme strategies in key areas, including the relationship of children's rights to sexual orientation and gender identity and the impact of hate speech on children's rights. In addition, UNICEF was completing the guidance it was preparing on how States parties could report on the steps they took to comply with their budgetary obligations under article 4 of the Convention and was continuing to make updates to its handbook for the implementation of the Convention. A survey on the use of the handbook had prompted a strong call for a revised version that would be accessible online.

28. **Mr. Conte** (Child Rights Connect) said that the backlog of reports caused by the pandemic was still a major concern for civil society. The Committee should use every possible opportunity to make the consideration of those reports a priority. The recent publication of the Committee's 2022 schedule of meetings had been a welcome step towards increasing the predictability and transparency of the reporting process. The publication of an annual planning document was also highly appreciated by civil society organizations, which hoped that they would shortly have access to the document for 2023. The difference in the duration of online and in-person meetings was another matter of concern.

29. Child Rights Connect welcomed the Committee's decision to move towards a predictable review cycle of eight years with a mid-cycle follow-up procedure. It also welcomed the decision to allow States parties to opt for a simplified reporting procedure and hoped that other treaty bodies would follow the Committee's example. Child Rights Connect wished to know when and how the decision would be implemented and what implications it would have for civil society.

30. Child Rights Connect also welcomed the Committee's joint statement with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders concerning the killing of an indigenous child human rights defender in Colombia. As no reference to children had been made in the negotiations on the most recent Human Rights Council resolution on human rights defenders, States clearly needed to be shown that child human rights defenders were under threat. Child Rights Connect had noticed that the Committee was making increasingly fewer recommendations on child human rights defenders, so it would provide it with a memorandum containing pointers that should help advance the discussion.

Adoption of the agenda (CRC/C/90/1)

31. **The Chair** said that in accordance with rule 39 of the rules of procedure, meetings would be held in public unless the Committee decided otherwise. All public meetings would be webcast live. The session would last five weeks to make up for the time lost to the pandemic.

32. **Ms. Franchetti** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the total number of States to have ratified the Convention was still 196. Four reports had been received since the closure of the eighty-ninth session, bringing the number of reports pending consideration to 86. While all initial reports under the Convention had been received, 58 periodic reports were overdue, including 7 for more than 5 years and 8 for more than 10 years.

33. The total number of States to have ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict was 172, the same as it had been at the closure of the eighty-ninth session. Thirty-eight initial reports were overdue, including 19 for more than 5 years and 17 for more than 10 years.

34. The number of States to have ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography was still 177. Tunisia had submitted its initial report;

51 initial reports were overdue, including 22 for more than 5 years and 28 for more than 10 years

35. There were still 48 States parties to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, the same number as at the closure of the previous session.

36. **The Chair** said that, during the session, the Committee would hold dialogues either remotely or in person with delegations from Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Djibouti, Greece, Iceland, Kiribati, Somalia and Zambia. The Committee would continue to discuss how its cooperation with relevant bodies could be made more robust, thereby enhancing the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. It would also continue discussing its methods of work and other matters, including ways of addressing the increasing backlog of reports. In addition, it would discuss any communications or other information it had received under the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, consider the report on the day of general discussion on the rights of children in alternative care held online in September 2021 and continue work on its draft general comment on children's rights and the environment.

37. She would take it that, if there were no other comments, Committee members wished to adopt the agenda.

38. *The agenda was adopted.*

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.55 a.m.