



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 6 May 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Skelton
later: Mr. Chopel

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

Consideration of reports of States parties

Combined fourth to sixth periodic reports of Namibia (CRC/C/NAM/4-6; CRC/C/NAM/Q/4-6; CRC/C/NAM/RQ/4-6)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Namibia joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Namibia**, introducing her country's combined fourth to sixth periodic reports (CRC/C/NAM/4-6), said that, since the submission of the reports in 2020, a number of steps had been taken to ensure that the Child Care and Protection Act (No. 3 of 2015) was implemented.
3. Key stakeholders, including social workers, police officers, judicial officials and teachers, had been given training on the Act, and in the upcoming financial year that training would be made available not only to relevant public officials but also to children and other young people. Every financial year, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare set aside resources to provide training on the Act to community members. Guidelines for training on the Act had been developed by the Ministry with outside support and were available online. Child-friendly materials on provisions of the Act related to HIV testing, medical consent, child marriage and harmful practices had also been developed.
4. The Ministry played a pivotal role in coordinating the steps taken by a range of institutions responsible for children's affairs. At the national level, coordination of efforts to give effect to the Convention was the responsibility of the Permanent Task Force on Children. Regional Child Care Protection Forums coordinated such efforts regionally, while at the local or constituency level they were coordinated by Constituency Child Care Protection Forums.
5. In the 2023/24 financial year, the amount of the monthly grant for children with disabilities had increased considerably. There had also been increases to State maintenance and foster care grants, as well as to other benefits. In addition, steps had been taken to expand eligibility for the grants. The Ministry, whose budget had likewise grown, helped fund other programmes, including one to provide shelters for, and to help rehabilitate, children living and working on the street. Private operators of residential childcare facilities and shelters for survivors of gender-based violence, as well as caregivers who provided community-based educational services to vulnerable children, could obtain public subsidies as part of such programmes.
6. The country had made significant progress in developing systems to collect data that would make it possible to assess progress in areas such as health, education and social protection. The Ministry had developed a statistics strategic plan on child protection, designed to facilitate evidence-based planning, decision-making and performance management. A database maintained by the Office of the Prime Minister contained information on the number of children receiving child grants. The information was broken down by type of grant, region, constituency, and sex and age of the beneficiary. A newly introduced database would enable officials from the Ministry's Gender Equality, Child Care and Protection Directorate to monitor relevant developments, including in respect of violence against children, at the national, regional and constituency levels. A monitoring, evaluation and reporting strategy deployed within the framework of the National Agenda for Children (2018–2022), which involved regular data collection, report compilation and performance assessments, was a vital part of the overall Agenda. Another Ministry database contained information relating to the country's early childhood development centres. Other government institutions, including the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the Ministry of Health and Social Services, had developed systems to collect disaggregated data.
7. Legal frameworks had been put in place to protect and safeguard businesses and consumers, including children. Under the Liquor Act (No. 6 of 1998), for example, the sale of alcoholic beverages to persons under 18 was prohibited. There was also a consumer protection policy. More information on the rights of the child and the business sector could be found in the country's combined periodic reports (CRC/C/NAM/4-6, paras. 64–68).
8. Children had opportunities to participate in the lawmaking process. There was a children's parliament, for example, in which children from all 14 of the country's regions

were represented. The development of laws, strategies and policies that affected children was informed by the views expressed by children in consultations held with them alone. Children were also represented on the Permanent Task Force and regional coordination bodies.

9. According to the Vital Statistics Report (2024), more than 90 per cent of births took place in health facilities. There were birth registration offices in high-volume hospitals. An integrated service delivery model made it possible to provide birth registration and other public services in local communities. A national mass registration campaign, which supplemented routine outreach efforts, including in schools and in remote locations, was ongoing. Social workers registered the births of children who were abandoned. A record of every vital event was made, regardless of the person's nationality. Birth certificates were issued even for stateless persons.

10. When a bill on civil registration and identification that was currently before Parliament was made law, it would facilitate legislative or other efforts to include undocumented persons, including stateless persons, in the civil register, to regularize the status of undocumented persons and to intensify mobile birth and identity registration services. A number of other bills had been drafted with a view to solving the problems faced by undocumented or stateless persons.

11. Under the Constitution, every child had the right to a name and a nationality. The issuance of a birth certificate made it possible to exercise that right. As a result, parents were expected to register the births of their children as soon as possible.

12. According to 2016 figures, the national birth registration rate was 87 per cent (77 per cent for children under 5). There were large regional disparities: at 96.2 per cent, Karas, a southern region, had the highest birth registration rate, whereas Kavango West, in the country's north-east, had the lowest, at 67.3 per cent.

13. The Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology had developed a cybercrime strategy, accompanied by an awareness-raising plan, designed to sensitize the public, children and their parents or guardians in particular, to the dangers of the Internet. A number of cybersecurity awareness-raising sessions had been held in schools and elsewhere and were still being rolled out. The addition of the Safer Internet Day to the calendar of days to be observed had been just one of the many steps taken by the Government to protect the rights, privacy and safety of children in the digital environment.

14. The marriage of persons under 18, whether civil, customary or religious, was a punishable offence under the Child Care and Protection Act. The Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, which was working on a strategy to put an end to child marriage in Namibia, had developed material to familiarize the public with the prohibition of child marriage. It had also set aside resources for the necessary advocacy efforts.

15. Under the Constitution, children with disabilities, including children with albinism, had the same rights as all other children. Constitutional guarantees of equal rights were amplified under the Child Care and Protection Act.

16. **Ms. Kiladze** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that, although the State party had taken a number of commendable steps to promote and protect the rights of the child in recent years, much more needed to be done to ensure that its children could exercise their rights under the Convention. One challenge was to determine at what age a person was no longer considered a child in the State party. It would thus be helpful to learn whether the State party had plans to amend the Constitution and other laws with a view to ensuring that all persons under 18 were considered to be children.

17. She wished to know what had been done to set aside the resources needed for the Children's Fund provided for under the Child Care and Protection Act; whether plans had been made to require child rights impact assessments for all proposed laws and policies affecting children; what progress had been made towards the adoption of a new children's rights action plan; whether the resources to implement the plan would be made available; and whether there would be a mechanism to monitor progress under the plan. She also wished to know whether the Permanent Task Force had a clear mandate and the authority it needed to coordinate all efforts to implement the Convention, and whether the State party intended to

review the institutional structures that had been developed to coordinate Convention-related activities.

18. It would be helpful to know whether budgeting exercises were informed by a children's rights perspective, and whether additional funds would be set aside to ensure that water, sanitation, hygiene and other services were better funded and more widely available. She wondered how transparently budgets were drawn up and whether civil society organizations and children could participate in the process. She would also welcome a comment on the efforts that the State party had made to strengthen its public procurement systems.

19. She would like to know whether the data systems currently in place made it possible to monitor and analyse child-related data, and whether the data were disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical location, ethnic origin, nationality and the socioeconomic background of the children or families concerned. She also wondered whether plans had been made to collect data on violence against children, trafficking in children, and asylum-seeking and migrant children, and whether relevant stakeholders had ready access to regularly published statistical data.

20. As access to justice was crucial, she wished to know whether there were any child-friendly complaint mechanisms in the State party; whether children had access to legal aid; whether provision was made in law for compensating children whose rights had been violated; and, if so, whether such compensation was actually awarded. She wished to know, too, what had been done to ensure that children and other stakeholders, in particular persons working in the justice system, were aware of children's rights, including the rights enshrined in the Convention. In addition, she wondered whether plans had been made to increase funding for the Children's Advocate and what measures had been taken to continue strengthening the Office of the Ombudsman.

21. She would welcome a description of the steps that had been taken to familiarize children, parents and the public at large with the Convention, the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. An indication of whether plans had been made to increase funding for civil society organizations that worked with children and other young people would likewise be welcome. It would be helpful to learn what cooperation on children's rights by civil society and the authorities involved.

22. Children's rights and the business sector was another area of interest. In particular, she wondered whether violations or potential violations of children's rights by private enterprises were monitored and what was done to ensure that such enterprises were aware of their responsibilities.

23. Although there had been clear improvements to the birth registration system, it would be interesting to learn what efforts were planned to improve it further, in particular in remote and rural areas. It would also be of interest to learn more about the measures that were being taken to protect stateless children. In that connection, she wondered whether the State party planned to ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

24. She asked what procedures were in place to care for abandoned babies and ensure that they were later able to obtain information about their biological families. She also asked what steps had been taken to broaden access to the Internet, in particularly for marginalized children, whether there were any laws or policies to protect children from digital threats, and what was done to promote digital literacy.

25. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** (Country Task Force) said that, although a number of welcome legal and policy measures had clearly been taken in the State party, it would be useful to learn what practical effect those measures had had. She wished to know, for example, whether anti-discrimination legislation had improved the situation of the San people, half of whose children had no access to formal schooling.

26. Similarly, she wished to know what impact the idea that, in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child were to be a primary consideration had had in strictly practical terms. She also wondered whether the relevant actors were familiar with the

Committee's general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration.

27. It would be helpful to learn more about the mechanisms, including the children's parliament and the National Advisory Council on Children, that were meant to promote the participation of children in matters of concern to them. She wondered in particular what steps were being taken to strengthen those mechanisms, what role the Advisory Council played and what resources it had at its disposal. She also wondered whether children had a say in school and family settings, and whether the views of children from the Osire refugee settlement, who had evidently been consulted during the preparation of the State party's combined periodic reports, were indeed reflected in the reports.

28. She wished to know what impact the adoption of the Child Care and Protection Act had had on the abandonment of newborn children, which was a serious problem in the State party. In particular, it would be useful to have quantitative information on the scale of the problem before and after the adoption of the Act. As the problem was related to that of teenage pregnancy, it would also be helpful to know how accessible adolescent health services were, and whether health-care personnel had the training they needed to provide care to adolescent girls, in particular.

29. **Mr. Pedernera Reyna** (Country Task Force) said that, in view of the alarming results of a recent survey, he wished to know what progress had been made under the National Plan of Action to End Violence against Children 2020–2025. He would also like to know what steps the State party was planning to take or had taken to increase the number of social workers and help them improve their ability to work with children and adolescents. In addition, he wondered what measures were being taken to end impunity for violence against children, including sexual exploitation, and whether the authorities were aware of the funding problems that had led to the closure of a number of shelters for child victims of sexual exploitation or abuse and, if so, how they planned to solve those problems. Information on the measures, including legislative measures, that were being taken to combat the exploitation of children online would likewise be welcome.

30. He wondered what steps were being taken to ensure the sustainability of the Regional Child Care Protection Forums that were active throughout the State party; on the basis of what legal provision corporal punishment in the home could be treated as a criminal offence; and whether any efforts were being made to encourage positive forms of discipline, both in the home and in schools. He also wondered whether the State party had a strategy to put an end to harmful practices, including rites of passage to adulthood and child marriage, and, if so, what time frames were envisaged in the strategy.

31. It would be helpful to learn what steps were being taken to ensure the availability of the funds needed to support increasing numbers of vulnerable children, including orphans, to promote community-based care for such children, and to support the families of vulnerable children. He wished to know, too, what efforts were made to disseminate, throughout the State party, guidance on the equitable sharing of child-rearing responsibilities by men and women. In addition, he would welcome an explanation of the problems that had reportedly delayed cash transfers and the provision of food aid.

The meeting was suspended at 4.20 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

32. **A representative of Namibia** said that, after the economic problems caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Namibian economy was finally picking up. As a result, more resources, as she had suggested previously, had been made available for children. The monthly child grant, for example, had been increased from 250 Namibia dollars to 350 Namibia dollars. Old-age pensions, too, had been increased, in part to help grandparents look after their grandchildren. A decision had been made to turn the country's Food Bank programme into a programme for the disbursement of conditional basic income grants, which persons aged 19 to 59 could apply for.

33. **A representative of Namibia** said that the Constitution did not define a child as a person under 16, as had been suggested. It did, however, set minimum legal ages for certain activities: for example, children under 14 could not be employed in or required to perform hazardous work in factories and mines. Under the Child Care and Protection Act, the age of

majority was attained at 18 years, and not 21 as had previously been the case under the Age of Majority Act. Thus, Namibian law had been brought into conformity with international standards, including the Convention.

34. The establishment of the Children's Fund under the Child Care and Protection Act was a priority of the Government. Resources had been allocated, and it was expected that the Fund would be established during the current financial year.

35. The Government had set up the Permanent Task Force some years previously. It was composed of representatives of the various line ministries and national stakeholders with responsibility for upholding children's rights and was chaired by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare. The task force, which met quarterly, had a comprehensive mandate to address all matters affecting children. It developed inputs for policymaking, reported to Cabinet on the implementation of the National Agenda for Children (2018–2022) and issued recommendations.

36. The delegation took note of the questions that had been asked concerning the new agenda for children, funding for the water and sanitation sector and the improvement of procurement systems, in which regard it would provide written responses.

37. **A representative of Namibia** said that the Government recognized that access to justice was among the most important fundamental rights; it therefore provided legal aid to indigent persons and persons who were unable to afford a lawyer, including children. Under the Legal Aid Act, accused persons could choose between defending themselves, appointing a lawyer of their choice at their own expense, or availing themselves of legal aid. The Ministry of Justice employed 69 legal officers, who worked on a rotating basis to provide legal aid services in courts in all 14 regions of Namibia.

38. A child-friendly magistrate's court had been established with facilities that allowed child victims of sexual offences or offences involving domestic violence to testify without having to be in the presence of the accused. The Criminal Procedure Amendment Act provided for arrangements for vulnerable witnesses to testify.

39. The Ministry of Justice had carried out activities to raise awareness of justice services in areas such as inheritance and legal aid. Officials had visited communities and distributed pamphlets to residents, including children.

40. **A representative of Namibia** said that the Government recognized that children's needs were evolving and that some issues, including in the area of business and children's rights, had not been adequately addressed. Consequently, consultations had been organized with the business sector and the Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade with the aim of amending the Child Care and Protection Act in order to better protect children's rights in various spheres related to business.

41. The Government acknowledged that there were children in Namibia, such as those living in the Osire refugee settlement, who struggled to gain access to identity documents. However, much had been done to improve the situation. The Government had increased the number of registration points, and three ministries delivered integrated services, including birth registration and immunization, in communities. Furthermore, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security provided stateless and undocumented children with documents that facilitated their access to services. Such documents were not required for enrolment in school or access to health services. Indeed, in some cases, undocumented children from the Osire refugee settlement had attended school and even continued to university. The Ministry worked hand in hand with regional councillors and traditional leaders, particularly in remote and hard-to-reach areas, to identify areas with a high proportion of undocumented residents where outreach campaigns might be conducted.

42. **A representative of Namibia** said that the aim of the civil registration and identification bill, which had been submitted to Parliament, was to create a comprehensive register that included all Namibian citizens, permanent and temporary residents, stateless persons, undocumented persons, refugees and asylum-seekers. The country's blueprint for development, the Harambee Prosperity Plan, identified the regularization of the status of undocumented and stateless persons as a priority activity.

43. Namibia had joined the WeProtect Global Alliance, under which it had committed to protecting children from online sexual exploitation. The Government had also taken part in a survey of child online sexual abuse and exploitation in eastern and southern African countries. The findings, published in the report *Disrupting Harm in Namibia – Evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse*, had revealed the prevalence of online abuse in Namibia and set out insights and recommendations for action, which the Government was taking forward.

44. **A representative of Namibia** said that the delegation was unable to inform the Committee whether the Government would ratify the statelessness conventions. The authorities were aware of the plight of stateless persons and aimed to address the problem through national legislation, in particular the civil registration and identification bill. The country's immigration laws contained nothing to prohibit the civil registration of any person on any grounds. Stateless persons could be issued with birth certificates indicating their status as non-citizens.

45. **A representative of Namibia** said that, as the Committee had noted, the abandonment of newborn children, or “baby-dumping”, had been decriminalized under the Child Care and Protection Act. However, much remained to be done to raise awareness and to educate communities about the Act and how its provisions could benefit children. The Government was considering further measures to address the problem and was working with communities on innovative approaches, such as so-called baby boxes, that would enable mothers to place infants safely in the care of the authorities, rather than leaving them in places where they might come to harm. The Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare was developing a proposal to provide a State grant to unemployed women who became pregnant. Measures to provide mothers with alternative options were in place but needed to be strengthened.

46. **A representative of Namibia** said that school enrolment among children from vulnerable and underprivileged groups, including ethnic minorities, was steadily increasing. Children from those groups benefited from government support from early childhood. Those who completed secondary education could apply for financial support from the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund in order to pursue higher education or vocational training.

47. The Basic Education Act and the Child Care and Protection Act both incorporated the concept of the best interests of the child. Social workers increasingly applied the provisions of the latter Act in cases involving child custody, the removal of children from abusive situations, and the resolution of disputes between parents or caregivers. Teachers monitored children's well-being and might refer a child to a social worker if they thought an intervention was in the child's best interest. The authorities also took the best interests of the child into account when evaluating foster care placements and living arrangements. Training in the provisions of the Child Care and Protection Act was provided for social workers, magistrates, clerks of courts, health service providers, representatives of non-governmental organizations, parents and other stakeholders.

48. As the head of delegation had explained, Namibia had various platforms for children's participation in policymaking and lawmaking processes. Different groups of children, including children with disabilities, refugee children and children living in residential care, had been consulted during the review of the Education Act. Children had also participated in a specific survey on violence against children and in the preparation of the study *Disrupting Harm in Namibia*, and they attended meetings of the Permanent Task Force when their school timetable permitted. The Government recognized the value of the views of children, who often understood the situation better than other stakeholders.

49. The role of the National Advisory Council on Children, established under the Child Care and Protection Act and composed of executive directors from various ministries, was to examine issues affecting children and make recommendations to the Government.

50. **A representative of Namibia** said that teenage pregnancy rates remained high but the Government was taking action to provide reproductive health-care services for adolescents. A task force, established by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the Ministry of Health and Social Services, sought to address the issue of teenage pregnancies, both in schools and health facilities and within the community at large. The task force was

developing tools that could be used to assess the reproductive health needs of adolescents and to train teachers and nurses. Projects were being implemented with development partners to provide safe spaces where children could access information and services related to sexual and reproductive health. A policy was in place to enable pregnant adolescents to give birth safely then return to school and resume their education. The Ministry of Youth was also working to provide family planning services to young persons who were not in school and those who might be unwilling to access medical facilities.

51. Approval had been given for an additional 134 social workers, which would increase the total number to 217 nationwide.

52. **A representative of Namibia** said that a recent survey on violence against children had shown low reporting levels. The national plan that had been rolled out included steps to raise awareness among children, caregivers and the broader community and encourage them to recognize and report violence against children, while parents, teachers and traditional community leaders were trained in how to protect children and how to react to reports of violence. Other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, had also been trained in how to identify and report children's rights violations. Children who had suffered violence or sexual abuse were placed in residential childcare facilities, where they could stay for as long as it took to investigate and resolve their case.

53. The Child Care and Protection Act included provision for auxiliary staff to work under the supervision of social workers. Although none had yet been appointed, tertiary education establishments and stakeholders were working on a training curriculum, and the Public Service Commission was drawing up criteria for the inclusion of auxiliary social workers in government staff structures.

54. *Mr. Chophel, Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

55. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that the Committee would be interested to hear about any specific measures in place to promote early childhood development and preschool education, especially in rural areas and among children from ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups, and about plans to guarantee that both primary and secondary schooling were universally available and free of charge. She was aware that many students in the State party were compelled to repeat school years or to drop out of education altogether, and she looked forward to hearing about any steps taken to address that matter. It would also be interesting to hear about moves to improve education and teacher training, particularly in the field of children's rights, and about action to include education about human rights, children's rights and the right to leisure as part of the school curriculum.

56. **Mr. Pedernera Reyna** said that he would be interested to hear about any strategies to ensure that disabilities in children were detected as early as possible, also in order to address the social stigma and discrimination that such children faced. He wished to know to what extent the recent review of the 1997 National Policy on Disability and the 2013 Policy on Inclusive Education had led to their alignment with international standards. The State party was to be commended for having increased the grants allocated to children with disabilities. Nonetheless, there were persistent shortages of reasonable accommodation and a lack of schools, particularly in the north of the country, equipped to accommodate students with disabilities of different kinds. He wished to know what action being taken to address that problem and to remedy the lack of sign-language interpreters. Lastly, he hoped to hear about any action being taken to address the situation of children with albinism, who often faced social rejection even from their own families.

57. **The Chair** said that Ms. Kiladze, Coordinator of the Country Task Force, would read out questions on behalf of Task Force member Ms. Skelton.

58. **Ms. Kiladze** said that the Committee wished to know whether the lack of human resources and skilled staff in the health-care sector was due to insufficient training of medical personnel or to a so-called brain drain of doctors and nurses. What steps were being taken to address that state of affairs? She would appreciate more information about steps being taken to provide equitable access to health services across the country, particularly to children in rural areas, and about any action the Government was taking to reduce malnutrition and stunting. She appreciated the honest acknowledgement in the periodic report that the State

party had dismally missed its target for sanitation but wished to know what that target had been, why it had been missed and whether it was linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.

59. The Committee recognized the Government's progressive approach to sexual and reproductive health education but remained concerned about access to reproductive health-care services, and particularly about reports that the legal grounds for abortion remained restrictive. She wondered what were the legal norms governing access to abortion for adolescent girls. Another cause of concern was the lack of mental health services for children, in which regard the Committee wished to be apprised of the anticipated timeline for the adoption of the mental health bill and of any plan in place to address the lack of qualified personnel. The delegation should provide statistics concerning current rates of HIV/AIDS infection and access to antiretroviral treatment. Was HIV/AIDS still a major problem among children and adolescents, and what steps were being taken to prevent mother-to-child transmission?

60. She wished to know what the Government was doing to promote children's awareness of and preparedness for climate change and natural disasters. In particular, she hoped to hear about any measures in train to increase the physical resilience of school infrastructure against extreme weather events. The Committee wondered what steps were being taken to protect the country's scarce water resources and to reduce waterborne diseases. Although a praiseworthy initiative, the Environmental Management Act was overly general and did not address, for example, the impact of mining on children in nearby areas. In that regard, she hoped to hear about initiatives aimed at regulating environmentally harmful business and including child rights impact assessment in any planned projects that might adversely affect the environment.

61. The Committee took note of the fact that the grant for orphans and vulnerable children had been increased and wished to know what percentage of eligible children were actually receiving it. What steps were being taken to overcome barriers in that regard, such as the documentation that needed to be provided? She looked forward to hearing more about the proposed amendments to the Refugee Act, in order to better understand how they affected asylum processes for children. She also wished to know where unaccompanied children were accommodated while awaiting their refugee determination and whether they were entitled to legal representation.

62. She wondered whether the Government had carried out any national studies to determine the extent of child labour. The Committee was anxious to know whether any action was being taken to implement its previous recommendation to amend the Labour Act by raising the minimum age of employment to 16 and the minimum age of employment in hazardous conditions to 18. The Committee had received troubling reports that the number of street children was increasing and hoped the delegation could provide statistics about how many children lived in street situations.

63. Given the high levels of sexual violence against children, it was important to ensure that child victims and witnesses were properly treated during investigation and prosecution processes. She was concerned that a single specialized court for such cases might not be enough and wondered if the authorities had explored other approaches to child justice, such as the *barnahus* model. She would be interested to hear about any programmes in place for child perpetrators of sexual violence against other children and, more generally, to learn whether children in conflict with the law were provided with legal aid. The delegation should inform the Committee about the current status of the child justice bill and about any interim improvements in the child justice system while waiting for the bill to pass into law, including alternatives to custodial penalties. That was of particular concern in the light of reports that children continued to be held in pretrial detention for long periods, sometimes alongside adults, in clear breach of article 37 of the Convention.

64. **Ms. Aho** said that she would be interested to hear more about birth registration mechanisms in maternity wards. She was concerned that, if the registration process took time, it might entail costs that would have to be defrayed by the mother. Once a birth had been registered, did the mother receive the birth certificate before leaving the ward? She wished to know if the State party had achieved the objective of its 2019 plan of action to ensure a

98 per cent birth registration rate by 2022, whether implementation of the plan had been evaluated, and what had been the findings. The Committee would be interested to hear what actions were taken following the discovery of an abandoned child. Lastly, she hoped that the delegation could inform the Committee about any plans to bring water and sanitation to the 23 per cent of schools that currently lacked such facilities.

65. **Ms. Kiladze** said that she wished to know the status and timelines for adoption of the many bills currently before parliament concerning, inter alia, sexual exploitation, child justice and marriage. She wondered when the State party intended to submit its reports under the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, which had been due in 2004. She understood that the Children's Fund had been established but it was not clear whether or not it was functioning. Lastly, she wished to know if legal aid was provided free of charge to all children in all cases.

66. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that the impact of the various strategies in place to combat teenage pregnancies could be assessed only through accurate statistics, which she hoped the delegation could provide. It was important, moreover, to provide adequate training to persons working in health-care facilities for adolescents; the Committee, in fact, had received reports that adolescents were sometimes unwilling to avail themselves of those facilities owing to a negative attitude on the part of staff. What steps were taken to disseminate information on child-friendly justice to those who needed it most, such as children with disabilities and children deprived of their liberty?

67. **A representative of Namibia** said that when an abandoned child was discovered, he or she was immediately taken to hospital for a thorough examination. Efforts were made to trace the parents and, if that was unsuccessful, the child was put up for adoption. Most foundlings were, in fact, adopted inside the country. The children were also provided with identity documents, which could subsequently be amended if the parents did eventually come forward.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.