



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child Ninety-sixth session

### Summary record of the 2799th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 14 May 2024, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Skelton

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

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

*Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Egypt (continued) (CRC/C/EGY/5-6; CRC/C/EGY/Q/5-6; CRC/C/EGY/RQ/5-6)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Egypt joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair** invited the delegation of Egypt to continue replying to questions put by Committee members at the previous meeting.
3. **A representative of Egypt** said that children under 18 accounted for 40 per cent of the estimated 9 million migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers currently living in Egypt. The Government was committed to integrating those children into society, providing them with basic services and guaranteeing them access to public primary and secondary schools. It was keen to develop activities to promote tolerance for those children among Egyptian students. The Ministry of Education facilitated the admission to Egyptian universities of refugees from countries experiencing political upheaval by exempting them from the requirement to submit their diplomas when registering.
4. Refugees were entitled to receive psychosocial support and enjoyed the same access to complaints mechanisms and legal aid as Egyptians. The Government had joined forces with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and donors to launch the Joint Platform for Migrants and Refugees. The role of the Platform was to improve the coordination of efforts to protect refugees and asylum-seekers, provide them with access to education and health services, and mobilize increased funding for those services. The Platform's work had been hampered by a lack of financial resources; she wished to remind the international community of its responsibilities in that regard.
5. The Government was fully committed to ensuring that refugees were not punished for entering or being present in the country illegally, in line with article 31 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Foreigners who had been detained on those grounds were released once they had expressed their intention to seek asylum and agreed to register with UNHCR to begin the application process. There were no detention centres specifically for migrants, and the judicial authorities applied the principle of non-refoulement. Refugees or asylum-seekers who were deemed to pose a threat to national security or public order could be deported under Act No. 89 of 1960. In such cases, the authorities worked with UNHCR to identify an alternative country in which the individual would be able to seek asylum. Act No. 82 of 2016 on combating irregular migration and migrant smuggling set out the measures to be taken by the Government to protect the rights of migrants who had been smuggled, with a particular focus on women and children.
6. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood had worked with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other stakeholders to prepare a guide on the protection of and assistance to child refugees, asylum-seekers and victims of migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons. The aim of the guide was to establish a national approach to supporting such victims, ensure that they had full access to the necessary services and protect them from abuse, violence and exploitation. The Government also cooperated with IOM and UNHCR to support and protect unaccompanied minors and child victims of trafficking, refugees and asylum-seekers. It had signed a memorandum of understanding with UNHCR, under which that agency had committed to handling all tasks relating to the registration of refugees and the determination of their status.
7. Complex regional and security challenges meant that there was a continuous influx of migrants into Egypt. Criminal groups had taken advantage of the situation, placing strain on the authorities responsible for determining who was truly in need of international protection. The Government lacked the resources required to guarantee the quality and sustainability of the services used by the large number of migrants in the country. Accordingly, it was essential for the international community to share the burden and support the Egyptian authorities in providing services and protection to migrants and refugees, especially children.

8. **A representative of Egypt** said that the Government encouraged refugees and asylum-seekers who had been subjected to harassment or violence to submit complaints to the competent State body for investigation. In cases in which migrants in an irregular situation had left their identity documents in their country of origin, the Government cooperated with the relevant embassy in Cairo in order to provide those migrants with the documents they needed to enrol in schools.

9. **A representative of Egypt** said that efforts to implement the national strategy to combat female genital mutilation appeared to have contributed to an overall decline in that practice. A national committee for the elimination of female genital mutilation had been set up and ran awareness-raising activities, media campaigns and capacity-building sessions for relevant stakeholders. Sentences for individuals found to have carried out female genital mutilation had been increased. Any doctor found guilty of doing so, for instance, would be struck off and sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment. The facility in which the doctor practised would be closed. Cases in which female genital mutilation led to death were punishable by 20 years' imprisonment. The Government had established a helpline to receive complaints of female genital mutilation; in 2023, 111 such complaints had been submitted. Victims were entitled to legal assistance and psychological support.

10. **A representative of Egypt** said that Egyptian law protected the fetus's right to life and provided for the criminalization of abortion. Abortions were permitted in the first 120 days of pregnancy only when necessary to protect the mother's health or when the fetus had severe defects that doctors would be unable to treat. The Ministry of Health provided women and girls aged between 15 and 49 years with affordable sexual and reproductive health services, including free or subsidized contraception, counselling and the treatment of sexually transmitted infections. The Ministry ran campaigns raising awareness of issues linked to sexual and reproductive health and, in 2022, had launched a programme to support Egyptian families, one of the aims of which was to reduce the number of women whose sexual and reproductive health needs were unmet by providing such services free of charge and training doctors to deliver them.

11. **A representative of Egypt** said that, while education was free from kindergarten to the final year of secondary school, parents were required to pay administrative fees equivalent to \$10. Certain families and students were exempt from those fees. The Ministry of Social Solidarity had built more than 1,100 kindergartens, adding to the 26,500 kindergartens that already existed across the country. Such establishments were attended by around 1.2 million children under 4. Population growth remained a major challenge for the education system; the Government had accordingly worked with civil society organizations to build, renovate and equip thousands of classrooms. The Ministry of Education planned to recruit 150,000 teachers over the coming five years and had launched a six-month training course for 1,000 prospective school principals, upon completion of which they would obtain a diploma in educational leadership.

12. Social or community schools had been set up in rural and remote areas that previously had no schools and poor access to basic services. They were small establishments, and pupils were taught in mixed-age classes by teachers trained in using active learning methods. Pupils obtained a primary education certificate upon completing their studies, which enabled them to enrol in the next stage of education. Such schools had proven successful in improving educational enrolment and completion rates and addressing school dropout. In 2023, the dropout rate had been 0.6 per cent at the middle school level and 0.29 per cent at the high school level. That same year, the gender parity index value had been 0.95 at the primary level and 1.23 in girls' favour at the secondary level. The values were the same in urban and rural areas. In 2020, women had accounted for approximately 52 per cent of students enrolled in public universities.

13. **A representative of Egypt** said that the Government had launched a national programme for the early detection of genetic diseases that could cause disability. Premature infants, for instance, were checked for 19 such diseases. A total of 49 facilities were able to treat newborns with those diseases, providing them with free care, medication, nutrition services and hearing examinations. Psychosocial support was offered to the infants' families. The Government was currently conducting a survey to gauge the levels of disability and

autism among children up to the age of 12. More than 1.1 million persons with disabilities had been issued with a card that guaranteed them access to essential public services.

14. A campaign had been run to raise awareness of inclusive education among more than 21,000 teachers, school administrative staff and social workers. Around 2,500 teachers had participated in courses on inclusive education and the use of technology in schools. School principals and education officials had been trained in managing the integration of students with disabilities. Steps had been taken to adapt assessment and examination formats to the needs of students with disabilities, including those with visual impairments. Special education schools had been opened in a number of governorates, and more than 150,000 students with disabilities were now integrated into Egyptian schools.

15. A total of 11 billion Egyptian pounds had been allocated to support persons with disabilities, including children. The State Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics had conducted its first-ever survey on disability in 2022, the findings of which had recently been published. The Government was working on the construction of a factory that would manufacture assistive and prosthetic devices for persons with disabilities. Act No. 10 of 2018 guaranteed persons with disabilities access to health, education and other services and established the requirement for government entities to list the services that they offered to such persons.

16. **A representative of Egypt** said that the Government had established a fund to combat addiction and substance abuse. The fund provided rehabilitation, psychological and behavioural therapy and education services, with a view to helping individuals overcome their addiction and reintegrate into society. In 2023, 80 per cent of individuals who benefited from such services had recovered. A celebrity-led campaign geared towards children had contributed to a 400 per cent increase in the number of individuals seeking treatment. An addiction helpline received around 2,500 calls each year. The fund had helped establish a hospital unit devoted to treating children with addiction issues and had launched a programme to provide training to former addicts and their families.

17. Discrimination was prohibited under the Egyptian Constitution and was punishable by imprisonment or a fine. Acts of discrimination were tried by the criminal courts. The Constitution provided for the sanctity of an individual's private life, and national laws did not criminalize private sexual relations between adults unless prostitution, which was considered a form of trafficking, was involved. With regard to trafficking, the Criminal Code established that there were a number of aggravating circumstances for that crime, including the involvement of children and situations in which the perpetrator was the victim's family member or worked in the victim's family home.

18. **A representative of Egypt** said that the Children's Code provided for the protection of children against harm and abuse in schools. Maximum sentences were extended in cases involving the abuse of children by adults or abuse committed by a child's parent or guardian or any person responsible for the supervision of children. The Ministry of Education provided annual guidance to teachers to inform them of the absolute prohibition of the use of violence in schools. It had also issued a ministerial decree to all schools to reiterate that physical or psychological punishment was banned. It provided instructions on positive parenting methods and regularly trained teachers and social workers in employing such methods. Steps needed to be taken to strengthen the role of social workers in schools. A helpline had been set up to receive complaints of violence in schools, which could also be reported to child protection committees for investigation. The Government worked with civil society organizations to provide victims with legal aid and psychosocial support, raise awareness of the issue and monitor and investigate any reported cases. A number of teachers alleged to have subjected students to violence or cruel treatment had been tried by the courts. Penalties handed down included dismissal, forced retirement, salary deductions, fines and imprisonment.

19. As Egypt was a party to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), child labour was prohibited under labour and children's laws. A 2021 decision of the Ministry of Labour established the conditions in which the recruitment of children for work was permitted, as well as the jobs and sectors in which children were not authorized to

work. The decision was reviewed every two years. A survey conducted in 2021 had found that there were 1.3 million working children, compared to 1.6 million in 2010.

20. The national plan to eradicate the worst forms of child labour in Egypt and support the family (2018–2025) provided for social protection for children and their families and for the economic empowerment of families, in particular mothers, through the provision of training enabling them to engage in income-generating activities. Furthermore, to qualify for the national conditional cash transfer programme, families must have children enrolled in school. Measures to prevent school dropout included a school nutrition programme and training for teachers in recognizing the signs of possible dropout. Children under 15 found to be working were removed from their employment and registered in community schools which catered for children who could not attend ordinary school or who had dropped out for more than two years.

21. Traineeships were subject to an agreement between an employer and a child's parent or guardian that was signed in the presence of a representative of the governorate. Their aim was to provide vocational training for no more than six hours per day, with a lunch break, in a safe environment and in manner that was not detrimental to the child's physical or mental well-being.

22. **A representative of Egypt** said that the Government periodically revised old laws with a view to modernizing them. Thus, a bill amending the Code of Criminal Procedure had been developed to take into account the State's obligations under international instruments. With regard to the treatment of child offenders, the bill was in keeping with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (the Havana Rules) and took into consideration the Committee's general comments No. 10 (2007) and No. 24 (2019). Pursuant to the constitutional prohibition of all forms of discrimination, the updating process also involved amending provisions that were discriminatory towards women. In 2020, the Constitutional Court had deemed unconstitutional a law whose provisions concerning admissible evidence in adultery cases promoted religious discrimination.

23. All children with Egyptian nationality, without discrimination, were entitled to apply for a national identification card once they reached the legal age. That amendment had been proposed by the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights, thus illustrating the body's effectiveness in achieving national objectives.

24. The Government was taking seriously the recommendations by the Committee against Torture relevant to the situation of children. During the dialogue with that Committee, the delegation had been able to provide data demonstrating the effectiveness of national accountability mechanisms and their ability to apply the principle of zero tolerance for the offence of torture.

25. **A representative of Egypt** said that the law prohibited the death penalty, as well as life imprisonment, for children and provided for alternatives to imprisonment. To improve juvenile justice, a law had been adopted in 2024, making rulings of the criminal court subject to appeal. Children aged 12 years and under were not criminally responsible, while special measures applied to children aged 13 or 14 years. Children under 15 could not be placed in prison pending trial but could be placed in a dedicated institution for a maximum of one week, unless otherwise ordered by the courts. The penalties imposed on juvenile offenders should not compromise their health or mental well-being. As a last resort, and where appropriate and in line with the principle of the best interests of the child, the courts could order a juvenile offender to be placed in a social welfare institution.

26. Alternatives to imprisonment, which were regulated by law and subject to oversight, included cautioning children against reoffending, releasing them into the custody of a parent or guardian, sending them to a rehabilitation centre, releasing them from specific places and ordering them to attend regular education activities. Placement in a hospital or institution was a last resort, and no more than one measure could be applied at once. Alternative sentences had increased, accounting for 58 per cent of penalties imposed in 2023.

27. By law, children must be held separately from adults, and failing to do so was a punishable offence. Between 2020 and early 2024, the oversight body of the Ministry of the Interior had identified 28 cases of children imprisoned together with adults, leading to the imposition of disciplinary measures against 38 officials.

28. Between 2020 and early 2024, more than 1,060 judges had taken part in 11 training sessions and workshops on child-friendly justice. Training in that topic was mandatory for prosecutors. Furthermore, 138 prosecutors had received training in children's and human rights issues.

29. **A representative of Egypt** said that, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Government was taking steps to integrate children in street situations into society through awareness-raising campaigns, the provision of psychosocial support by mobile units or at day centres, crime prevention and economic empowerment. The day centres also offered recreational and cultural activities. In addition, efforts were made, in conjunction with the private sector and civil society, to find opportunities for vocational training for street children over the age of 15.

30. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood had developed a national strategy on early childhood, which aimed to ensure the provision of high-quality services in the areas of health, nutrition, education and social protection, from gestation to the age of 6, and to overcome intergenerational poverty. The strategy focused on the creation of a supportive environment, good governance, education for parents, the role of institutions, data collection, and financial and human resources.

31. **Ms. Beloff** (Country Task Force) said that, under the Code of Criminal Procedure, despite not being criminally liable, children aged between 7 and 12 who committed an offence could be placed in a hospital or other care institution, effectively treating them in the same way as children over 15 who were criminally liable. She wished to know whether the planned amendments to the Code would address gaps such as the one just described and ensure fuller alignment with international law.

32. Similarly, the Code permitted minors to be detained and questioned without a lawyer present in cases of *flagrante delicto* or where there was a risk of evidence getting lost. Amid reports of children being subjected to ill-treatment, and even torture and enforced disappearance, by the security forces, she would welcome the delegation's comments on the extent to which institutional violence stemmed from outdated, deficient legislation.

33. She wondered how the State party ensured that the recruitment of children over 16 in the army was strictly voluntary. She would appreciate clarification of reports that children as young as 15 were recruited, which would constitute a violation of the State party's obligations under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

34. **Ms. Alassane Moulaye** (Country Task Force) said that she wished to know what measures the State party had taken to ensure that violence against children, including female genital mutilation and child marriage, was recognized as such by different communities, and how the Government intended to change societal attitudes and beliefs that prevented the full realization of children's rights. She would be interested to learn whether there was a grass-roots programme to involve members of communities in the promotion and protection of such rights.

35. **Ms. Otani** (Country Task Force) said that she would appreciate clarification of reports of attacks on schools in North Sinai, the use of schools for military purposes and the recruitment of children by armed forces or groups in the region. She wondered whether children aged 15 could serve in the armed forces or attend military colleges or institutes, and which law criminalized the recruitment of children in the armed forces.

36. **Ms. Aho** said that she would be interested to learn what strategies and programmes had been implemented to tackle obesity and to eradicate mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS. She asked what was the vaccination coverage rate in the State party, especially among populations in remote areas. She wished to know what percentage of children had disabilities, what factors caused disabilities among children and what steps had been taken to address those causes.

37. **Mr. Van Keirsbilck** said that he wished to know what measures the Government had taken to rebuild schools in North Sinai and to ensure that all children could attend school safely, and whether the State party intended to sign the Safe Schools Declaration. He wondered whether the Government would prevent people from Gaza from being charged amounts that could exceed \$1,000 in order to cross the border into Egypt and receive some form of international protection.

38. **The Chair** asked whether it was possible to prosecute children under national security law, whether children could be held in incommunicado detention, and whether any officials had been prosecuted for the torture of children.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.40 a.m. and resumed at 11.55 a.m.*

39. **A representative of Egypt** said that questioning suspects or detained persons without a lawyer present had been permitted in specific circumstances under the Code of Criminal Procedure. However, the right to have a lawyer throughout criminal proceedings, from the collection of evidence to the trial stage, without exception, was enshrined in article 54 of the Constitution, and a new draft amendment would remove all exceptions to that right from the Code of Criminal Procedure. All juveniles who had been accused of an offence were guaranteed the right to legal assistance.

40. **A representative of Egypt** said that, pursuant to the Children's Code, children aged between 7 and 12 could not be held criminally responsible. However, in certain circumstances when the child's development was under threat, courts could intervene to protect the best interests of the child, in line with articles 1 and 3 of the Code. Children over 15 could be tried alongside an adult by the same judge if they had participated in the same criminal offence. All safeguards and guarantees under the Children's Code were upheld and the judgment handed down must serve the best interests of the child. The Supreme Constitutional Court was responsible for monitoring and overseeing such cases. The Government had received no complaints of the enforced disappearance of children.

41. **A representative of Egypt** said that the immunization rate among children under 10 was 95 per cent. The discrepancy between the rate in urban and rural communities was very small owing to mobile vaccination units in remote areas. As part of a national health campaign, 48 million students and schoolchildren had benefited from measures to improve health and nutrition. According to the 2021 Egyptian family health survey, the child obesity rate had fallen by 5 per cent between 2014 and 2021.

42. **A representative of Egypt** said that measures had been taken to combat mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS under a national strategy covering the period 2016–2020 that had been implemented in cooperation with UNICEF. Approximately 4,000 people living with HIV, including pregnant women, teenagers and babies, received antiretroviral therapy on a monthly basis. More than 2,000 family counsellors had been trained as part of the first phase of a campaign to support mothers during the first 1,000 days of their child's life, which had been implemented in 10 governorates in the nine months up to December 2023. The campaign was intended to reduce the high rate of births by caesarean section and to improve the nutrition of pregnant and breastfeeding women. More than 39,000 children had benefited from a cash transfer programme. Various campaigns, including the Dawwie national initiative for the empowerment of girls, had been carried out to raise awareness of legislation on and reporting channels for violations of child rights, such as female genital mutilation and child marriage.

43. **A representative of Egypt** said that the Government had expended considerable effort to provide humanitarian, political and diplomatic assistance since the outbreak of the war in Gaza. Israel, which as the occupying power was responsible for protecting and assisting people under its occupation, had flagrantly violated its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, including the duty to provide asylum, with complete impunity. Egypt was fully committed to respecting the right to asylum under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. However, the situation of Palestinian refugees was unique, since they had been subjected to forced displacement and mass expulsion; many did not wish to claim asylum. Egypt would stand by the Palestinian people in resisting all attempts to weaken

or dismantle the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which sought to bring an end to the refugee crisis and uphold the right of Palestinian refugees to return. Since the outbreak of the war, Egypt had not closed its borders; it had worked closely with the Palestine Red Crescent Society to shelter thousands of injured Palestinians and their families, and it had continued to provide most of the humanitarian assistance delivered to Gazans, despite repeated attempts by Israel to obstruct it. The cost of providing housing, education and medical and other assistance to Palestinian refugees in Egypt had exceeded \$350 million.

44. **A representative of Egypt** said that, in North Sinai, the school dropout rate was lower than the national rate, the number of enrolled students had increased in the 2023/24 academic year, and school achievement was on a par with other regions of the country. A plan had been introduced to maintain and refurbish schools in all 27 governorates, under an agreement between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood and the Red Crescent Society.

45. **A representative of Egypt** said that reports received through the child helpline were referred to the national child protection committee, which then transferred the case to the relevant subcommittee at the governorate or village level. All committees comprised representatives of various ministries, including the Ministry of Health and Population, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Solidarity, and NGOs. The committees assessed the child's level of risk or the type of abuse suffered and referred the case to the appropriate service provider.

46. **A representative of Egypt** said that the Ministry of Defence and the army, in line with their duty under the Constitution, supported government efforts to ensure the smooth operation of vital strategic facilities and the provision of public services, including power stations, telecommunications hubs and health-care and education centres. The army had been deployed as part of strategies to counter national security threats from inside and outside the country and to respond to disasters and crises. The presence of law enforcement officers had been restricted to the outer perimeter of certain schools, to provide security and ensure that the right to education was upheld.

47. Under the National Military Service Act, certain conscripts were entitled to apply for termination of military service without giving reasons, and no disciplinary measures were taken against the applicants. Under article 200 of the Constitution, no individual, entity, organization or group was allowed to create military or paramilitary structures, groups or organizations, and other national laws prohibited the exploitation and forced recruitment of children by the army or any other armed forces. Given the long processing times of applications to military academies, children who had not yet reached 16 were occasionally allowed to sit the entrance examinations. However, no children below that age were admitted.

48. **A representative of Egypt** said that, with regard to restorative justice, regulations had been adopted that allowed the prosecution to retain a case file whenever it served the best interests of the child or the public interest to do so. A pilot initiative had led to changes in the behaviour of children who had been accused of a crime after they were provided with counselling. Consideration was being given to how to roll out the initiative nationwide.

49. **A representative of Egypt** said that the torture of children was prohibited and there were no recorded cases of the torture of children. The legal system of his country did not classify legislation as relating to security, but rather had a Criminal Code and specialized codes for certain types of crime, such as terrorism.

50. **A representative of Egypt** said that the executive regulations for children's homes made no reference to the solitary confinement of children; it was not practised. Children were placed in children's homes in accordance with those regulations.

51. **A representative of Egypt** said that any person who infiltrated the borders of the country would be considered by law enforcement officers to have committed the offence of illegal entry, since it would not be evident that the individual was in a position to apply for asylum until his or her situation had been examined. With reference to article 31 (1) of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, persons who did not voluntarily present themselves to law enforcement officers would be transferred to the investigating authorities



for illegal infiltration of borders. The investigating authorities would notify UNHCR of any case in which they were aware of a pretext for seeking asylum. Asylum-seekers, including children, could be detained for a maximum of 24 hours; during that time, they enjoyed the rights provided for in the Children's Code.

52. **A representative of Egypt** said that the national alternative care strategy 2021–2030 was based on the concept that the family was the natural environment in which to raise children, and every effort was made to keep children with their families or relatives.

53. **A representative of Egypt** said that, in 2022, when his Government had hosted the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, it had provided the first-ever youth pavilion and had held a stand-alone “Youth and Future Generations Day” to ensure that young peoples' perspectives were heard and were reflected across the climate agenda. It had also appointed the first-ever youth envoy.

54. **A representative of Egypt** said that, under Act No. 86 of 2012, the State provided national health coverage for children from birth until they reached the age of primary education, including access to X-rays, surgery and medication. Under Act No. 99 of 1992, a different compulsory medical insurance system covered schoolchildren up to pre-university level.

55. **A representative of Egypt** said that the child protection system was based on two mechanisms: the 16000 Child Helpline; and the child protection committees and subcommittees. The Helpline was free of charge, it operated 24 hours a day under the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood and was based in Cairo. A circular of the Office of the Prosecutor General set out its relationship with the Helpline and guided prosecutors on contacting the Helpline to ensure that child offenders or witnesses received appropriate support, including a social worker and legal assistance, if required. On average, the Helpline received more than 1,550 calls each month; it received reports from all children, without distinction as to nationality or migration status. The child protection committees could receive complaints directly from children and adults and provided services to children, including psychosocial and legal support.

56. The *kafalah* system was an alternative foster system for children who, for whatever reason, had no parents and those who had been deprived of a family environment. The Ministry of Social Solidarity had set up a committee to simplify procedures for families who wished to care for children. Children were followed up and removed from families if necessary, such as if they were subjected to violence.

57. **A representative of Egypt** said that, according to data collected by an office affiliated with the Office of the Prosecutor General, between January 2020 and April 2024, approximately 1,550 children had been deprived of their liberty. Between 2019 and 2024, 111 cases of female genital mutilation had been investigated and prosecuted, and 23 convictions had been handed down. During the same period, there had been 95 investigations into early marriage that had resulted in 23 convictions.

58. **A representative of Egypt** said that his Government's well-established social protection system included measures such as health care, housing and cash transfers. The number of families covered by the Takaful and Karama cash transfer programmes had increased substantially since it had been set up in 2015, and the amount of cash support provided had doubled between 2013 and 2023. Social protection programmes benefited families with children under 6 and those with children between 6 and 18 who were in education, while cash transfer programmes targeted orphans and families living below the poverty line, as well as the children of farmers, fishers and casual labourers. Orphans living with their extended family received a monthly allowance, and children in foster families and social care institutions benefited from care and rehabilitation services.

59. The Decent Life initiative for rural development was considered a best practice for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It aimed to improve the lives of 60 million persons living in rural areas through a comprehensive set of measures, which included cash transfers, access to social services and the development of telecommunications and transportation systems.

60. **A representative of Egypt** said that, in view of the fact that the formation of non-State armed groups was criminalized, the recruitment of children to such groups was criminalized in principle and there was no need for a specific provision outlawing child recruitment to them. Complaints of human rights violations were forwarded to the relevant authority; the human rights unit of the Office of the Prosecutor General and the military prosecutor took note of complaints that fell under the purview of the military court, which were then heard by that court.

61. **A representative of Egypt** said that every person on the territory of the State party who had reached the age of criminal responsibility was subject to the provisions of the Criminal Code. Allegations of breaches of national security that involved a child were treated in the same way as allegations of adult involvement, aside from the application of special procedures due to the child's age. In addition, children found guilty of a breach of national security were liable for a reduced penalty of imprisonment, whereas adults could be handed down a sentence of life imprisonment or even execution.

62. The courts strove to apply the Convention in their work, and the Supreme Constitutional Court had referred or alluded to it in its rulings. In 2022, it had ruled that special children's courts should be set up to ensure that the best interests of the child prevailed; those courts would also support the full implementation of the Convention. Two rulings relating to children's rights under the Convention had been handed down by the Court of Cassation. It had ruled that, following divorce, a woman should have priority in remaining in the marital home with her children and could remain there even once her children had reached the age of majority; and that the director of a health care system was responsible for addressing all cases in which children had been exposed to health risks in hospitals.

63. **A representative of Egypt** said that efforts to set up children's courts had resulted in the establishment of three tribunals with child-friendly chambers and a special waiting room for those deprived of their liberty. The measures were intended to ensure that children's rights were upheld throughout the legal process and that children were protected from the most difficult parts of legal proceedings.

64. **Mr. Chophel** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that the dialogue had been interesting and constructive. He hoped that the State party, having made great progress in recent years, would return with an inspiring story of even greater efforts to protect the rights of children in its following periodic report.

65. **A representative of Egypt** said that he and his delegation had been delighted to join the Committee to review the combined periodic reports. Although it was difficult to share details of every initiative to promote and protect children's rights, he and his delegation had tried to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the Convention in their country. His Government had been among the first to ratify the Convention and would continue to engage with the Committee, with the support of the human rights architecture. The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights would continue to play its role and work with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood to promote a holistic approach to the rights of children.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*