



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child Ninety-eighth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 2876th meeting**

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 31 January 2025, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Skelton

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- * No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.
** No summary records were issued for the 2867th to 2875th meetings.

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The discussion covered in the summary record began at 5 p.m.

Closure of the session

1. **The Chair**, reflecting on the Committee's efforts to hold States parties to account for their failure to uphold children's rights, said that the staggering levels of violence against children, including sexual violence, in several of the States parties that had appeared before the Committee during the session had been particularly notable. There appeared to be widespread impunity for violence in the home, in the community and in religious institutions. In some countries, children were in the grip of chaos caused by gang violence and organized crime.
2. Another theme that had loomed large was the ongoing pushback against gender equality, which threatened to prevent adolescent girls from enjoying their reproductive health rights and gaining access to reproductive health services. That hostility to gender equality was being expressed against the backdrop of what, in some of the States parties whose reports had been reviewed during the session, were high rates of teen pregnancy. Poverty and inequality also had a negative impact on children's lives.
3. In some States parties, there was ambivalence about viewing children as independent rights holders. Decisions that affected children's lives were often made without consulting them.
4. In many parts of the world, mere survival was a daily struggle. In the Sudan, for example, war had raged on as the Committee had met. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, too, tensions had increased. More positively, a ceasefire had been announced in Gaza, and a number of detained teenagers and hostages had been released.
5. In another encouraging development, the Committee's Views in the case *M.E.V. et al. v. Finland* (CRC/C/97/D/172/2022) had been voted the best United Nations treaty body decision of 2024 in a poll organized by the Centre for Fundamental Rights at the Hertie School, an institution of higher learning in Germany. The case concerned three Sami sisters from a reindeer-herding family who had challenged the granting of a mineral exploration permit in their traditional lands. It was gratifying to learn that, as shown by the results of the poll, the Committee's jurisprudence was attracting attention. More gratifying still was the knowledge that it was having an impact on children's lives.
6. She would provide more information on the Committee's recent activities when she presented the report on the session. First, however, she wished to give the floor to Francisco Vera, a child human rights defender from Colombia.
7. **Francisco** (Colombia) said that, as the Chair had suggested, it was a critical moment for children's rights the world over. In a part of his own county, in fact, Catatumbo, more than 40,000 children had been displaced by large-scale violence earlier in the week. Forced displacement was a fact of life in other parts of the world, too, including the Sudan, Yemen and Gaza.
8. War had changed. Children were targeted now. Schools, hospitals and houses were being bombed. Adults often said that children were the future, whereas for him they were the present. In either case, however, war had been declared on the future and the present.
9. Environmental degradation added to the damage caused by war. States simply did not want to do what had to be done. Annual fossil fuel subsidies continued to total hundreds of billions of dollars. Military spending accounted for nearly 13 per cent of global economic activity. The new collective quantified goal on climate finance agreed to at the most recent session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had fallen well short of the \$1.2 trillion sought by the global South.
10. In the twentieth century, human beings had managed to develop the atomic bomb in only five years, but they had since proved incapable of putting a stop to the use of weapons against children. The situation was unacceptable, and it was for that reason that calls for children to have the right to live in a peaceful world could not cease. There could be no giving up or losing hope, and inspiring words, of which there had been many, should be followed by deeds.

11. It was the last session for the Chair and several other members of the Committee. It was surely not, however, their last time fighting for human rights, including children's rights.

12. **The Chair**, thanking Francisco, said that it was good to be encouraged not to lose hope. She often found herself reflecting on how bad the situation was, but it was necessary to keep believing that it could improve. Peace was no naive dream.

13. Turning to the report on the Committee's ninety-eighth session, she said that, on 31 January 2025, the date of the closure of the session, there were 196 States parties to the Convention, 173 to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, 178 to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and 52 to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.

14. The Committee had held 30 meetings during the session, which had opened on 13 January 2025. All 18 members had attended the session, and at least some members of all the delegations of the relevant States parties but Saint Kitts and Nevis had participated in the meetings in person rather than remotely. The Committee preferred to engage in person with the delegations of States parties, but it understood the position of small island States such as Saint Kitts and Nevis.

15. During the session, the Committee had considered the periodic reports of Ecuador, Eritrea, the Gambia, Honduras, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Slovakia. If there were no further comments, she would take it that the concluding observations on the reports of those seven States parties could be adopted.

16. *It was so decided.*

17. The Committee had also adopted decisions on eight individual communications. Criminal justice, the separation of children from incarcerated parents and healthcare for children with disabilities were some of the topics touched on in the communications. In addition, the Committee had considered the action that States parties had taken in follow-up to the requests it had made in its Views. In nine cases, as it had happened, the Committee had been of the view that the States parties in question had taken satisfactory action, and as a result the follow-up dialogue had concluded.

18. At the current session, the Committee had completed an inquiry under article 13 of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. The inquiry, which was the Committee's second completed inquiry, had concerned the killings of two 11-year-old girls by the security forces of Paraguay. The report on the inquiry, together with the State party's response, had been posted to the Committee's website. A decision on another of the several other inquiries on which the Committee was working had been adopted and would be made public in due course.

19. Discussion of the Committee's methods of work and the steps taken in follow-up to the treaty body strengthening process, including with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, had continued. Cooperation with other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies or other entities had included interaction with the Working Group on discrimination against women and briefings by representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Child Rights Information Network. Representatives of Child Rights Connect, which had continued working alongside the Committee, would help facilitate the upcoming conversations between the Committee and the groups of children from a number of States parties that were set to appear before the Committee in the coming months.

20. A first draft of the Committee's next general comment, on children's rights to access to justice and effective remedies, would be made public shortly, and at that point there would be ample opportunity for stakeholders, including children, to comment on it. In fact, children's groups, which had participated in the first round of consultations, on the concept note for the draft general comment, had already provided considerable input.

21. The Committee had held its sixteenth informal meeting with States the day before. Representatives of 7 of the 60 States present had taken the floor.

22. She and four other Committee members were leaving the Committee at the end of the month. She invited each of the four other members to take the floor.

23. **Ms. Otani** said that the highlights of her eight years as a member of the Committee had included her contributions, particularly as Chair, to the 37 public statements made by the Committee on thematic or country-specific issues concerning children. Other highlights had included her contributions to child rights mainstreaming and her advocacy of the participation of children in the Committee's work. She had, for example, begun inviting children to speak at the public openings of the Committee's sessions. It had been a pleasure for her to see that, as the statement just made by Francisco had shown, the practice of having children speak at the Committee's public meetings had continued.

24. **Mr. Pedernera Reyna** said that, during his eight years as a member of the Committee, the Committee had adopted a number of general comments, improved its methods of work, including by making its coordination with other entities and mechanisms more robust, and considered dozens of individual communications submitted under the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. It had also conducted article 13 inquiries.

25. In an unprecedented development, the Committee had also held a session in Samoa. As Chair, he had had to grapple with the uncertainty caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The pandemic was no longer a public health emergency, but other crises, including attacks on the Convention in the name of family values, wars and the cash-flow crisis affecting the United Nations, continued to complicate the Committee's work, which was more necessary than ever.

26. **Ms. Todorova**, thanking the many people who had helped her during her eight years on the Committee, said that those years had involved both satisfaction and frustration. Progress had been made, but she was leaving the Committee frustrated by the increasingly open denial of rights enshrined in the Convention, social polarization and other ills. She hoped that the Committee would continue to keep the letter and spirit of the Convention alive. As a former Committee member, she would do her part to that end.

27. **Ms. Zara** said that it had been a great privilege for her to have been part of the important work that the Committee had done during her four years as a member. She had learned a great deal from her fellow members; she would take her memories of them back to her country, Chad, where they would accompany her in her day-to-day work at the Ministry for Women and the Protection of Young Children.

28. **The Chair**, noting that presiding over the meetings of a group of 18 had often been challenging, said that being able to listen to different voices was what had made it possible for the Committee to engage with States parties from all parts of the world while remaining true to the Convention, the instrument that was at the core of the Committee's work. After all, members came and members went, but the Committee and the Convention were constants.

29. As others had noted, there had been troubling pushback and backsliding in respect of children's rights. As a result, toughness was going to be required of the remaining Committee members, the incoming members and the departing members.

30. During her time as Chair, the Committee had kept abreast of developments in parts of the world where children were facing unimaginable horrors as a result of war. She had, for example, presided over dialogues, often difficult, with delegations from Israel, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and the State of Palestine. Even States parties caught up in conflict or sceptical of the Committee's work, however, had been willing to engage with the Committee. That willingness was surely prompted by a commitment to the Convention that they shared with the Committee.

31. It had been a privilege for her to have been a member of the Committee for eight years and to have chaired it for the past two. She was proud of a number of achievements – the development of the Committee's jurisprudence, for example – and looked forward to engaging with the Committee and its work from the outside.

32. **Mr. Gudbrandsson**, paying tribute to the departing Committee members, said that he hoped that their departure would not put an end to their advocacy of children's rights. It could not have been easy to have chaired the Committee over the past two years, which had been characterized by unusually high levels of division, but the Chair, aided by her

considerable fund of common sense, had presided over the work of the Committee in admirable fashion.

33. **Francisco** (Colombia), speaking not just for himself but also on behalf of his generation, said that he wished to thank Committee members for what they had done for children's rights and encourage them to keep up the good fight. Children the world over should be able to live in peace.

34. **The Chair** said that, although it could sound naive to say that children should grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding, that statement was made in the preamble to the Convention, and there was no reason not to believe it or to stop saying it.

35. If there were no further comments, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the report on its ninety-eighth session.

36. *It was so decided.*

37. After the customary exchange of courtesies, she declared the Committee's ninety-eighth session closed.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.