



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 2884th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 15 May 2025, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Kiladze

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States Parties *(continued)*

Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq (CRC/C/IRQ/5-6; CRC/C/IRQ/Q/5-6)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Iraq joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Iraq**, introducing the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, said that his Government remained committed to upholding its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Iraq had acceded in 1994. Despite the complex challenges of recent decades, the principles enshrined in the Convention continued to be incorporated into government policies, including the national child protection strategy. A legislative review had been undertaken to ensure that current laws – including the child protection bill – were consistent with international standards.
3. **A representative of Iraq**, continuing the introduction of the periodic report, said that the text had been drafted following extensive consultations with children's rights organizations. Human rights had pride of place in the government programme which sought, inter alia, to tackle poverty and unemployment, develop healthcare and education, promote the rule of law and reconstruct liberated areas.
4. The crimes committed by the Da'esh terrorist group had had a profound impact on the rights of children throughout the country, and the Government had sought rectify that impact by holding perpetrators to account and compensating victims. In particular, action was being taken to remedy the situation of foreign children whose mothers had been convicted of terrorist offences. In cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 1,286 such children had already been returned to their countries of origin. Work was also ongoing to repatriate Iraqis, many of them children, who were residing in Hawl and other camps inside Syria. Thanks to extraordinary efforts on the part of the Government, 18,000 Iraqis had been brought back and integrated into rehabilitation programmes.
5. The National Child Data Portal, launched in 2023 in cooperation with UNICEF, was an important source of information for the formulation of policies and strategies to advance the situation of children in the country. A census conducted in 2024 had revealed that Iraq was inhabited by 45 million people and had a population growth rate of 2.33 per cent. Data from the census would also help the Government pursue comprehensive development while protecting human rights. A multiple indicator cluster survey on maternal and child health was due to be held in 2025.
6. During the reporting period, Iraq had introduced or enacted a number of pieces of legislation that reflected international human rights standards. They included the Legal Aid Act, the Health Insurance Act, the Social Security Act and a bill to combat domestic violence. A bill on juvenile justice had been amended to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 9 to 11. A national child protection policy and a strategy for the development of early childhood had also been rolled out.
7. A number of institutions existed to protect children and families, including domestic violence units inside primary healthcare centres. In addition, a hotline had been opened to receive reports of violations of children's rights. Workplace inspections were conducted with a view to identifying instances of child labour, and a national strategy to curb child labour was in the process of being developed. Social protection measures against poverty were being expanded to cover an increasing number of beneficiaries, and child protection units had been set up to address the needs of children from disadvantaged families.
8. The Government ran healthcare strategies and programmes, in particular for women, children and infants. The number of health centres offering family planning services had increased, vaccinations for children were provided free of charge and healthcare units had been set up inside schools. With a view to addressing the problem of school overcrowding, the Government had rebuilt or renovated around 6,500 educational establishments and was in the process of constructing more. Efforts were also being made to prevent children from dropping out of school, in particular through grants for beneficiaries of social protection.

School curricula had been updated and training had been provided to teaching staff to ensure that education kept pace with modern scientific advances. Child offenders were provided with accelerated learning courses with a view to their reintegration.

9. The Optional Protocols to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and on the involvement of children in armed conflict were duly enforced by the country's law enforcement agencies. In particular, the law forbade the recruitment into the armed forces of any person under the age of 18, and the Government had developed a body of strategies to protect children against the risk of recruitment by terrorist groups. Thanks to its efforts in that regard, Iraq had been removed from the list of countries that violated the rights of children, in the latest report issued by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

10. **A representative of Iraq**, continuing the introduction of the periodic report, said that the Government of Kurdistan Region had developed an action plan for the period 2021–2025, which included 16 goals related to children's rights, 9 of which had already been achieved. In 2022, the Regional Government had approved a plan to protect children against violence and a committee had been formed to approve the necessary budget allocations. A high-level ministerial committee for the protection of children had also been established. The age of criminal responsibility had been raised to 11, in Kurdistan Region as in the rest of Iraq, and it was forbidden to hand down the death penalty against minors who, instead, were integrated into psychosocial rehabilitation and education programmes. Children implicated in the activities of armed groups or otherwise affected by conflict were treated as victims.

11. The Government of Kurdistan Region had allocated 20,000 housing units for vulnerable persons, including orphans who had reached the age of 18 and who could live in the units until they were 24. More than 1.7 million students were enrolled in the Region's 7,370 schools and, thanks to a programme to encourage a return to education, 33,000 children had resumed their schooling over the previous three years. More than 11,000 children with disabilities in the Region were regularly attending school. The Regional Government had launched a mother and child healthcare strategy, which was being rolled out in 13 hospitals, 28 health centres and 167 health units with services such as screening for breast cancer and assistance for female victims of violence. The Ministry of Health ran multiple programmes, including vaccinations for children, care for pregnant women and an advice hotline. Thanks to the Ministry's efforts, the child mortality rate had fallen by 42 per cent to 8.69 per 1,000 live births, which was below the global average.

12. A team had been formed to take legal action to combat child marriage, and the courts had had occasion to consider 212 cases in that regard, most of them originating in displaced person camps. During a recent anti-trafficking campaign, visits had been conducted to over 200 companies and, of 79 people arrested, 12 had been convicted by the courts. Children's rights were also incorporated into environmental protection policies. More than 550 children in the Region were in State care and 53 were being looked after by foster families. A number of new care homes for girls had recently been opened. Children of unknown parentage were provided with birth certificates under the Civil Status Act. It was important to recall that the Region was host to more than 860,000 displaced persons and refugees, whose needs for shelter, education and medical care were largely being met by the Regional Government.

13. **Mr. Van Keirsbilck** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that he acknowledged the efforts the State Party had made to improve children's rights, despite the difficult situation it had been suffering for many years. He looked forward to hearing more about how the Convention was applied within the national legislative order and how often it was invoked by the courts or used as a basis to develop law and policy. He hoped that the delegation could explain why the Government continued to believe that its reservation to article 14 of the Convention was justified.

14. The delegation should provide more details about the contents of the child protection bill and inform the Committee when the bill was finally going to be enacted. He wished to know if child rights impact assessments were envisaged as a matter of course when developing new legislation, and he would appreciate further details about who was responsible for the overall implementation of child protection strategies, how such strategies were monitored and what budget allocations they received. He also hoped to hear more about

how the child protection information management system would be used. To what extent was the budget allocated to children and children's rights being impacted by the reported difficulties the State was facing in collecting tax revenue?

15. The Committee would be interested to hear what steps the State Party was taking to collect disaggregated data and how it ensured that such data was accurate. He wished to know whether the Government had any plans to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. He wondered where children whose rights had been violated could register a complaint and what steps were taken to ensure that they had access to justice. In that connection, he was concerned by reports that victims seeking to file complaints with the police had simply been refused. He wondered if the delegation could inform the Committee about the outcome of a legal complaint against the former head of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights and, more generally, what was done to guarantee the Commission's immunity and whether its mandate also extended to children's rights. He would welcome information about how the global cut in international aid budgets was expected to affect Iraq.

16. The sexual exploitation of children remained one of the Committee's major concerns and he wished to know whether services for victims such as shelter, medical assistance and counselling were properly coordinated. In the light of figures indicating that more than 80 per cent of children had suffered some form of violent discipline, he wished to know what was being done to prevent corporal punishment. He also wished to know if "honour" was still admissible as a justification for criminal acts. He hoped that the delegation could inform the Committee about the status of a proposed amendment to the law that would affect the legal age for marriage. In that regard, he was concerned by the fact that, although the legal age had been set at 18, up to 28 per cent of girls were still married before reaching that age. Lastly, he wished to know what action was being taken to rehabilitate children who had suffered sexual slavery under Da'esh.

17. **Ms. Ianachevici** (Country Task Force) said that she wished to commend the State Party for the efforts it had made to incorporate the four general principles enshrined in the Convention into its legal and policy frameworks. With regard to the principle of non-discrimination, she wished to know what steps had been taken to protect marginalized groups, such as internally displaced children, children with disabilities and children born outside wedlock. It would also be interesting to know if the Government had any plans to amend article 14 of the Constitution to explicitly include protection for children against all forms of discrimination. What efforts were underway to combat gender-based discrimination, particularly in rural areas and areas affected by conflict?

18. She hoped that the delegation could explain how the principle of children's best interests was applied across all legislative, administrative and judicial procedures. It would be helpful to understand what training was offered to judges and law enforcement officials in that regard. She wished to commend the authorities for the efforts they had made to uphold the principle of children's right to survival and development, particularly through specialized healthcare initiatives. In that connection, she hoped to hear about any safeguards in place to ensure that no child was ever sentenced to death, including under counter-terrorism laws. What was done to ensure that all children, especially those born in the areas formerly under the control of Da'esh, were promptly registered and guaranteed legal identities? The Committee welcomed the efforts being made to promote children's participation through initiatives such as the Children's Parliament and would welcome more details on action being taken to promote the meaningful involvement of younger children and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. What mechanisms existed to provide feedback to children on how their inputs had influenced decisions?

19. She commended the State Party for its ongoing efforts to provide displaced children, with a family environment and alternative care. She would appreciate more details about the 2025 amendments to the Personal Status Act, particularly regarding the expanded role of religious courts in family matters. What was the rationale behind the amendments and how did the Government intend to ensure that children's rights were not negatively affected? In particular, she wished to know how the authorities planned to address the potential discriminatory impact of the amendments on women and female-headed households. She

wished to know what efforts were made to harmonize the operation of religious courts with the State Party's international obligations under the Convention and what training on child rights and international standards was provided to the religious court judges.

20. Lastly, she wished to know what family- and community-based care options existed for children deprived of a family environment, what efforts were made to identify extended family members potentially able to provide care, what initiatives were in train to formalize foster care arrangements and what steps were taken to allocate sufficient financial and human resources to make foster care a viable and sustainable alternative.

21. **Mr. Chopel** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to know whether there had been any recent developments in respect of the Nationality Act No. 26 of 2006, whether children born out of wedlock received birth certificates and what measures were in place to ensure that the births of children displaced by armed conflict or other humanitarian emergencies, children of parents affiliated with Da'esh and children belonging to ethnic or religious minorities, were registered. He wished to know, too, whether the Personal Status Act had been amended to enable all children, regardless of their parents' religion, to receive the identity documents they needed; in addition, it would be helpful to learn whether there were any plans to put an end to the practice of automatically registering as Muslim the children born to parents in interfaith marriages. He wondered what measures were being taken to protect children from harmful online content and how, in the absence of a law on cybercrime, people who harmed children online were prosecuted. He wondered, too, what progress had been made towards the adoption of such a law.

22. **Mr. Mezmur** (Country Task Force) said that he would welcome a description of the steps that the State Party had taken to combat discriminatory attitudes towards children with disabilities. He wondered in particular about the practical impact of the recent amendment pursuant to which the Care of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs Act No. 38 of 2013 had been renamed the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs Act. It would be useful to learn, too, whether newly adopted laws were informed by a disability rights perspective and, again, about the practical impact of the commendable participation of persons with disabilities in the formulation of disability policy. He would also welcome additional information about the mandate of the Commission for the Care of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs and the efforts that were made to ensure that it and other relevant institutions complemented each other.

23. He wished to know what progress had been towards establishing a central national database of information on children with disabilities and whether there were any plans to build on the introduction of a stipend for children with disabilities attending school and thus to make such benefits available to all children with disabilities, not only those who were in school. He wished to know, too, whether the authorities had identified the need to move away from the medical model of disability and, if so, what new approach they intended to adopt.

The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4.15 p.m.

24. **A representative of Iraq** said that, despite his country's reservation to article 14 (1) of the Convention, concerning the child's freedom of religion, the people of Iraq enjoyed religious liberty. In their rulings, the country's courts drew on the provisions of international human rights instruments such as the Convention. In one case that had generated considerable interest in the country, in fact, the court had specifically stated that the provisions of the Convention had informed its ruling.

25. **A representative of Iraq** said that the aim of the national database containing information on the situation of children in the country, which had been operational since July 2013, was to provide up-to-date statistical data on all matters of relevance to children's lives – birth registration, child mortality, education and nutrition, to name but a few – and thus to inform the work of researchers and policymakers.

26. The Commission for the Care of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs, for its part, worked to promote the well-being of persons with disabilities, including by awarding subsidies to pay the wages of carers. The Commission also worked with other institutions to provide relevant goods and services, including training on special education for teachers, and it reached out to the families of children with disabilities to help them provide their offspring

with the support they needed. To that end, mobile teams were active throughout the country. In addition, the Commission, which was also active in areas affected by conflict, administered inclusive education programmes, oversaw the issuance of smart identity cards for children with disabilities, set aside funds to ensure the advancement of such children as part of the National Strategy for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities, operated training centres and provided opportunities for children to participate in sporting and other recreational activities.

27. After the ratification of the Convention in 1994, a number of measures had been taken to promote the participation of children in matters of concern to them. With the support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, for example, children's parliaments had been established in more than 420 schools, and more than 700 students had taken part in consultations in Baghdad to solicit children's views on efforts to protect them from violence, improve education and provide safer technology. In addition, media outlets and civil society organizations that made efforts to engage with children received government support. In all, more than 3,500 boys and girls had taken part in outreach and other activities organized by civil society. UNICEF had supported the development of a means of canvassing children for their views on the health and educational services available to them.

28. At the 34 shelters overseen by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, children deprived of a family environment had access to a wide range of goods and services, including room and board, clothing and hygiene products, literacy classes, vocational skills training and periodic health checks. The largest numbers of shelter residents, 62 per cent of whom were boys, could be found in Baghdad, Basra and Nineveh. The monthly budgets of the shelters, each of which had a head social worker, depended on the number of residents.

29. **A representative of Iraq** said that Iraq was, as stated in article 3 of its Constitution, an ethnically and religiously diverse State. Under article 14, the people of the country were proclaimed equal before the law. There could be no discrimination on grounds of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, origin, colour, religion, sect, belief, opinion or economic or social status. Under the Constitution, moreover, the State was enjoined to protect mothers, children and older people and, in particular, to ensure that they had what they needed to live free and dignified lives.

30. In recent years, a number of laws had been adopted with a view to protecting national minorities. Under a 2022 law, for example, the surviving members of the Yazidi community, including hundreds of children, had been made eligible for financial compensation and psychological rehabilitation. All necessary health services were provided to children born as a result of the rapes committed against the backdrop of the armed conflict. Efforts were also being made to ensure that all children, in particular displaced and unaccompanied children, had the official documents they needed. Matters had improved considerably since 2022, when very few documents such as birth certificates had been issued to such children. Bureaux had been set up in Nineveh to issue birth certificates and other documentation to the children of Da'esh. Genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes were covered in another recently adopted law.

31. Under the Constitution, the official languages of Iraq were Arabic and Kurdish. Article 2 of the Official Languages Act, which had been adopted in 2017, provided for measures to ensure greater awareness around languages with the aim of bringing together the different ethnic groups in the country. There were 608 private schools for the Turkmen minority, 284 schools for the Syriac minority and a number of Christian schools. A centre had been established for the teaching of the Syriac language, and a dedicated television channel broadcast content for children from minority groups. Work was under way towards the adoption of anti-discrimination legislation to protect minorities and preserve religious and ethnic diversity. There was no discrimination against any ethnic minority in Iraq.

32. **A representative of Iraq** said that the authorities were making concerted efforts to determine how best to tackle torture and ill-treatment in detention facilities. In addition to its existing legislation and codes of ethics, the Government intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and, to that end, had recently established a national committee to examine the best way to proceed. The committee, which was comprised of representatives of

the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights and a number of ministries, would also draft a five-year plan aimed at strengthening anti-torture mechanisms, monitoring bodies and procedures for filing of complaints of torture. The committee had approached a number of other countries to seek out best practices in that regard.

33. **A representative of Iraq** said that children could report domestic violence to the Ministry of the Interior by calling the 911 free telephone hotline. Hospitals and schools could also make such reports, which would be followed up immediately. Pursuant to Act No. 29 of 2012, the Ministry had taken a series of measures to combat sexual violence and exploitation and ensure the optimal protection of children.

34. The Rehabilitation Centre for Minors provided psychological care and support to children, with a view to helping them reintegrate into society. Legislators were making efforts to uphold the legal right to an identity for every person born in Iraqi territory, including children who had been born in Da'esh-held locations and whose parentage was unknown. Within the Ministry of the Interior, a committee had been formed to facilitate retroactive birth registration for such children and furnish them with identity documents, and to clarify the situation of other children born in the context of terrorism-related activities. To date, 120,000 identity documents had been issued. The Criminal Code (Act No. 111 of 1969) criminalized all forms of child abuse, including online abuse. Certain departments within the Ministry of the Interior – specifically one set up by under Order No. 1133 of the Supreme Judicial Council – were responsible for monitoring harmful and abusive online content.

35. **A representative of Iraq** said that the comprehensive bill on child protection had already undergone its first reading, and a committee, comprised of representatives from numerous bodies including the Office of the Prime Minister, had been formed to gather comments and proposals on the bill.

36. The authorities had reviewed the legislation regulating marriageable age, including the Civil Status Act, but no amendments had yet been introduced. While the minimum age remained set at 18 years, exceptions could be made for marriage at 15 years if it was deemed to be in the best interests of the child concerned; such exceptions were not therefore considered to be contrary to the Convention. The relevant national laws were being reviewed by a council composed of ulama and specialists who would present recommendations to parliament. Although there was currently no legal definition of the best interests of the child, other principles such as the protection of children from abuse were set out in law. The Personal Status Act provided for the best interests of the child to be considered in decisions about guardianship. There were currently no religious courts in Iraq, and any codes drafted by religious authorities were submitted to the relevant bodies, which would decide whether or not to apply them.

37. **A representative of Iraq** said that, although Iraq had not ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, it provided many services to refugees, including healthcare and psychosocial support, with a view to their voluntary return. The country hosted 81,000 Lebanese refugees and, since 2012, had received large numbers of Syrian refugees. A standing committee that included representatives from the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Migration and Displaced Persons was responsible for the provision of services to residents of refugee camps in Kurdistan Region, where the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers were located.

38. The authorities were proud of the progress that had been made in rehabilitating children living in camps in north-eastern Syria. The Amal Centre, which had been opened in 2021, was overseen by the Ministry of Migration, with support from UNICEF, the World Food Programme, Terre des hommes and numerous national and international non-governmental organizations. The Centre had provided educational support and cultural activities for 8,000 children living in Hawl camp, the population of which had reached 61,000, with 1,955 children helped to return to education, 352 receiving help with social reintegration and 6,402 having returned to live in their places of origin. Efforts were made to protect the children in the camp from exploitation, and the Government hoped to receive greater support from the international community to help it consolidate the progress made. All returnees in the camp were able to enjoy their rights and freedoms while undergoing rehabilitation.

39. **A representative of Iraq** said that the implementation of the child protection strategy was divided across multiple ministries. However, as the budgeting system was based on sectoral allocations, it was not possible to provide details of the funds earmarked specifically for the strategy. The authorities faced numerous challenges in finding funding for protecting children's rights, in particular because of the security situation and the arrival of many foreign combatants to join Da'esh. As a result of the country's current financial situation, funding and technical support was needed from international organizations in order to ensure that Iraq could uphold its commitments under the Convention.

40. **A representative of Iraq** said that 70 per cent of the more than 9 trillion dinars (ID) allocated to the health sector were earmarked for women and children. Act No. 22 of 2020 on social security, which had entered into force in 2023, made provision for children to receive nutrition services as well as treatment for cancer, chronic diseases and other illnesses without charge. More than 62,000 children were enrolled in free medical insurance schemes, and assistive devices were provided to children who required them.

41. The ministries responsible for health, education and labour had worked with the Ministry of the Interior, the Supreme Judicial Council and the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop a plan to combat violence against women and children, and guides had been developed for hospital workers on how to tackle domestic violence and rape. A total of 15 units had been opened to provide medical and psychosocial care to women and children who had been victims of violence. New doctors working in emergency centres received training on how to draft medical reports in cases of violence against women or children.

42. The Ministry of Health provided care for children born in the context of forced or informal marriages or as a result of rape. More than 40,000 people had received legal, psychological and medical assistance at comprehensive support centres in Nineveh and Kirkuk, and survivors of violence perpetrated by Da'esh had been treated at hospitals. At the Amal Centre, 32,000 children had received psychological support, and 34,000 childhood vaccinations had been administered. Psychological support services were also available for young people in 407 towns and villages, and guidance on nutrition and sexual and reproductive health was also provided to young people. A national mental health strategy had been introduced, and a bill on mental health had been submitted to parliament. More than 7,000 education coordinators – or 20 per cent – had received mental health training, and a survey had been conducted on the impact of stress and anxiety on students' performance.

43. **A representative of Iraq** said that more than 100 training sessions on the Convention and 65 workshops on protecting children during armed conflict had been organized in cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), ICRC and other international partners. More than 61,000 copies of a guide on the protection of children during armed conflict had been distributed. In excess of ID 200 million had been allocated to run comprehensive training programmes for the period 2024–2032 on human rights and international humanitarian law, including the protection of children's rights. The authorities had removed more than 80 million landmines and other remnants of war in several governorates.

44. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Federal Supreme Court had ruled that, while article 41 of the Criminal Code did provide for men's right to discipline their wives and children, it did not authorize domestic violence. It thus followed that all forms of violence against children were prohibited and punishable as a crime under the Code. There had been many cases in which the law enforcement authorities had intervened to punish fathers or teachers who had used violence against their children or students.

45. A bill aimed at protecting children cybercrimes had been submitted to the Council of Representatives. The purpose of the bill was to establish the online exploitation of children as a criminal offence and set out the penalties to be handed down against perpetrators, who, in certain cases, in particular those involving violence of any form, were liable to a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

46. **A representative of Iraq** said that benefits were paid to the families of more than 3.5 million children. Allowances were also disbursed to approximately 66,000 children with disabilities and to 3,000 orphans. The Government had granted bursaries to convicted minors and children with disabilities in order to help them to complete their education. Individuals

who provided full-time care to children with disabilities were entitled to receive a salary from the Commission for the Care of Persons with Disabilities, which was funded from the federal budget. Overall, around 154,000 children with disabilities received some kind of financial support from the Government.

47. **A representative of Iraq** said that, in 2024, the Ministry of Education had been allocated a budget of ID 12 trillion Iraqi, which it had used to pay its staff and to finance initiatives including the free provision of school textbooks for students of all ages and the granting of bursaries to certain groups of children. The right of children with special needs to receive an education was provided for in the Compulsory Education Act, pursuant to which the Ministry had taken a number of steps to ensure that such children received the support they required to attend mainstream classes.

48. **Mr. Mezmur** said that he wished to know what the State Party was doing to reduce the health sector's reliance on external financing. It would be helpful to learn what measures were being taken to address the disparities in immunization coverage and deliver vaccines to zero-dose children, most of whom were from poor communities or areas affected by conflict. Information on any steps taken to fulfil Sustainable Development Goal 3.2, which concerned the elimination of preventable deaths among newborns and children under 5, would be welcome. The delegation might also wish to describe what had been done to tackle overweight and obesity among children, address the high prevalence of anaemia in women and children, increase the exclusive breastfeeding rate and ensure the implementation of the WHO recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children. He wondered what the State Party was doing to address the high incidence of mental health conditions among the members of the population affected by armed conflict. Information on any steps taken to tackle adolescent pregnancy would also be appreciated.

49. He would like to know whether the State Party had introduced any measures to help children who had been unable to attend school owing to the armed conflict or the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to catch up on their studies. He invited the delegation to outline the obstacles hindering the introduction of online teaching, in particular in Kurdistan. While he welcomed the State Party's adoption of legislation on early education, he wished to learn what was being done to address the fact that less than 10 per cent of children had access to early education services. It would be helpful to know what measures had been taken to ensure that teachers in early education establishments and primary schools met the standards established by the State Party's authorities. He hoped to hear about how the Ministry of Education was working with its partners to collect data on school dropout among girls. The delegation might also wish to comment on what was being done to ensure that young people had access to vocational training programmes and alternative learning paths that would help them to enter higher education or the labour market. He would be interested to learn the reasons behind the State Party's establishment of the high-level ministerial committee described in paragraph 58 of the report, what gaps that committee had identified and what had been its key achievements.

50. While he welcomed the issuance of directives stating that children without identity documents should not be prevented from enjoying their rights to education and health, he would like to know what the State Party did to ensure that such children had access to essential services in practice.

51. **Ms. Ianachevici** said that she would like to know whether any standard procedures had been established for handling cases involving unaccompanied children returning from the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic and whether any of those children were placed with community-based foster carers or members of their extended family. She invited the delegation to describe what was being done to develop and implement quality standards governing alternative care settings and what independent mechanisms had been established to monitor the care provided and address cases of abuse and neglect. It would be helpful to learn about the training and capacity-building delivered to professionals who worked with children deprived of a family environment.

52. The delegation might wish to comment on what the State Party was doing to identify children of incarcerated parents, protect their rights and well-being, provide them with access to mental health and education services and ensure that they received follow-up care to

prevent them from falling into other situations of vulnerability. She would appreciate information on any measures, taken or envisaged, to review and strengthen initiatives to improve living standards for children and their families, including by tailoring such initiatives to the specific needs of displaced children and those living in poverty or other vulnerable situations. Details of the steps taken to provide the population with a high quality and diverse range of food would be welcome, as would an explanation of what was being done to ensure that all children had access to drinking water and sanitation and whether the State Party had considered requesting technical or financial support from its international partners in that regard. It would be useful to know what the State Party was doing to ensure that families living in poverty, in particular those in rural and marginalized communities, received adequate financial assistance and access to essential services on a non-discriminatory basis.

53. **Mr. Chophel** said that it had been brought to the Committee's attention that Iraqi children were among the most exposed to extremely high temperatures. Accordingly, he would like to know whether the State Party had developed any mechanisms for assessing and monitoring the impact of environmental factors on children's health, with a view to informing the development of strategies to address those factors and ensure compliance with air and water quality standards. It would be helpful to learn, too, whether the State Party used disaggregated data to formulate policies that addressed the specific environmental risks faced by children. He would appreciate information on any steps taken to incorporate content on climate change into the school curriculum and teacher training programmes.

54. **Mr. Van Keirsbilck** said that he wished to know whether the State Party was considering ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Information on the legal status granted to migrant and refugee children in the State Party would be welcome, as would an explanation of the protection to which they were entitled, the length of time during which they were authorized to remain in the State Party and what was done to guarantee their access to essential support services.

55. He wondered whether the State Party had ever conducted an analysis of the root causes of the economic exploitation of children and whether it had developed any tools or training programmes to support officials in tackling child labour. He requested an explanation of the discrepancy between the increase in the number of cases of child labour identified by labour inspectors and the decrease in the number of inspections conducted. It would be helpful to know what steps were taken to reintegrate children engaged in child labour into society and punish those who had forced them to work. Clarification of the minimum age at which children could work would be welcome.

56. He would appreciate information on the procedures in place for dealing with children in street situations, including what tactics the competent authorities used to remove children from the streets and whether they took steps to reunite the children concerned with their families. It would be interesting to learn what was done to provide child victims of trafficking with access to referral services and ensure that they were treated as victims rather than as offenders. Specific examples of cases in which the perpetrators of trafficking had been brought to justice would be welcome.

57. He wondered whether new legislation in the area of child justice had been adopted and, if so, whether the State Party had taken steps to assess its consistency with the Committee's general comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system. While he acknowledged the recent increase in the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 9 to 11 years, he wished to know whether the State Party would consider raising it to the Committee's recommended age of 14 years. In that connection, it would be helpful to know how the State Party handled crimes committed by children below the age of criminal responsibility. He would welcome updated statistics on the number of children who had been deprived of their liberty, in addition to information on the measures in place to ascertain the age of child detainees and the steps taken to ensure that they were detained only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time possible. The delegation might wish to comment on whether non-custodial measures were used and whether children continued to be held in the same facilities as adults.

58. The Committee had taken note of the fact that the State Party had been removed from the Secretary-General's list of perpetrators of abuse and exploitation of children in conflict. Accordingly, he would be interested to learn whether the State Party continued to monitor the situation in that regard. Information on the steps taken to explicitly criminalize the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict would be appreciated. He would like to know whether the State Party had any military schools and, if so, from what age children could attend and what kind of training was provided to them. Lastly, he invited the delegation to specify whether the State Party was considering incorporating the Safe Schools Declaration into its national policies.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.